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## **Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in the United Kingdom**

Jan Dobbernack  
Tariq Modood  
Nasar Meer  
University of Bristol

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**5. New Knowledge  
Country Synthesis Reports**



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**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**

**JAN DOBBERNACK, TARIQ MODOOD  
AND NASAR MEER**



**Work Package 5 – New Knowledge on Tolerance and  
Cultural Diversity in Europe**

**D5.1 Country Synthesis Reports on Tolerance and  
Cultural diversity - Concepts and Practices**

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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion:  
Responding to the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Europe**  
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## **Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)**

**ACCEPT PLURALISM** is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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**Jan Dobbernack** is a Research Assistant at the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol.

**Tariq Modood** is Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy and Director of the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol.

**Nasar Meer** is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the Department of Social Sciences, Northumbria University.

### **Contact details:**

Dr Jan Dobbernack

Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship  
University of Bristol  
3 Priory Road  
Bristol  
BS8 1TX  
United Kingdom

Fax: +44 (0)117 33 10929

E-mail: [jan.dobbernack@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:jan.dobbernack@bristol.ac.uk)

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ethnicity/>

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## **I. Introduction**

The United Kingdom's multi-national character has meant that national identity and cultural diversity have long been matters of concern. With devolution for Scotland and Wales, a process has been set in motion to accommodate claims to political and cultural self-determination among the British constituent nations. In addition the four British nations, significant challenges can be traced to the beginnings of labour migration, notably after the Second World War from the Caribbean and South Asia. More recently, the arrival of immigrants from Eastern Europe has been perceived as both challenging and economically advantageous.

In the 2000s, Britain has seen the arrival of significant numbers of labour migrants from new European Union member states. These flows have been contested and public attitudes towards the scale of recent arrivals from post-accession countries and of refugees are comparatively negative (GMFUS 2011, 8; Jolley and Katwala 2012). The long-term settlement of groups of immigrant and their descendents – what we call ‘post-immigration’ groups in this report – marks an area of public debate that is relatively independent from contestations about the recent influx, in particular from European post-accession countries. Regarding post-immigration groups, the discussion about what kind of ‘difference’ can be accommodated, and how, occurs both nationally, in response to contested issues and events, and locally, where schools, councils and non-governmental actors seek to respond to the ethnic, cultural and religious mix in the British population. Regarding the national debate, cultural diversity is sometimes considered to pose a challenge in relation to cultural and national identity as well as to concerns with social order, integration and cohesion. Locally, claims for non-discrimination in housing, education and public life as well as for respectful treatment, in relation to ethno-cultural and in particular religious practices have been put forward since the arrival of immigrants in post-war Britain. Both locally and nationally, we can observe features of an evolving and strengthened framework of legally enforced anti-discrimination whose historical evolution is underpinned by changing attitudes and new conceptions of British national identity.

The multicultural reality of contemporary Britain has increasingly been taken for granted such that the presence of post-immigration groups is more often considered a welcome addition to British life. This trend means that Britain is a place that acknowledges and celebrates diversity in its population and that reconsiders its ‘national story’ to take account of multicultural realities (CMEB 2000; Uberoi and Modood forthcoming). Non-discrimination, equality, respect and recognition in relation to various dimensions of difference have been turned, albeit slowly and not unequivocally, into political commitments. Recent years saw such commitments coincide with new attempts to conceptualize an idea of ‘Britishness’ that identifies a set of shared values while acknowledging the diverse make-up of the British population. In line with such concerns and driven by anxieties about social fragmentation, recent public policies have been designed to provide for a sense of ‘community cohesion’. Changing policy commitments and the frequent re-naming of political agendas indicate some fluidity in the field of ethnic minority accommodation. It is therefore not always clear if this fluidity reflects changing rhetoric or substantive content in the political inclusion of post-immigration groups (Meer and Modood 2009).

Against this broad background of political commitments, institutions and social practices, this report examines historical and contemporary dynamics of the debate on cultural diversity. It surveys the development of claims and grievances, responses from majority society and the



mobilization and political activism of post-immigration groups with particular emphasis on the South Asian and Black Caribbean experience.

*In a first part* the report outlines the historical formation of British minorities as well as contemporary challenges. What is considered to be a ‘challenge’ does not remain constant and the report is particularly interested in the ways in which the presence of post-immigration groups in British society has been considered problematic. For this purpose it retraces changing understandings of ‘diversity challenges’ with a focus on public debates, contested events, such as the ‘Brixton riots’ of 1981, and the mobilization of British Muslims around the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* in 1988/9. It reviews the scholarly literature on British race relations and gives a historical overview of the development of public policy measures. Drawing on this historical background and a discussion of contemporary developments, it highlights practices, ideas and institutional arrangements of accommodation, tolerance and respect that respond to the various diversity challenges that this report identifies.

In this first part, the report also considers the paradigms that have been used to make sense of the claims and the very presence of post-immigration groups in Britain. ‘Political blackness’ had been posited as a unified basis for ethnic minority (i.e. non-white) identity politics. Following its decline, there are broadly two ways of considering the presence and identities of British post-immigration groups, as well as of conceiving of the normative framework for their accommodation: *multiculture* and *multiculturalism*. The former emphasizes processes of cultural mixing and hybridisation. The latter considers claims for recognition and respect, such as towards religion in the public sphere. Multiculturalism is concerned with the reappraisal of difference as a positive fact instead of an unwelcome aberration. Its concern is with equal respect and with the need for Britain to adapt its regimes of citizenship, policies and laws to recognize cultural pluralism. Multiculture, by contrast, is concerned with fashioning a form of equality that affords minority groups a place among the cultural representations of the nation as well as in everyday situations of conviviality. One achievement that we discuss in this part of the report, and that can be accounted for by the success of this latter paradigm, is the overcoming of stigma directed at ‘mixed race’ individuals for how they were seen to constitute a challenge to clear-cut classifications of belonging. The ‘diversity challenges’ that arise from the perspective of each of the two positions are accompanied by the additional challenge – what we call the challenge of ‘double accommodation’ (Modood and Dobbernack Forthcoming) – that consists of relating the two positions in a non-antagonistic and non-mutually exclusive way.

*The second part of the report* examines challenges in British education, which has been an important site of debate about the scope of acceptance, toleration and respect for post-immigration communities and new immigrants. There are stark disparities discernible in educational attainment, and children of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean ‘mixed heritage’ generally perform worse than the national average. Other ‘mixed’ groups or children with an Indian or Chinese background exceed this average. Religious affiliation correlates for Christian and Hindu pupils with higher rates of achievement, while Muslim pupils perform worse, in particular if they are male. Although some groups suffer considerable disadvantage, there is no uniform picture of ethnic disadvantage in British education. The patterns of generational upward mobility across different post-immigration groups are varied, too, and a complex mix of cultural, social, economic and spatial factors seems to account for variations between the educational attainment of these groups.

The notion of minority underachievement, however, has also been questioned for how it may involve a stigmatisation in particular of Black Caribbean boys. Anti-racist perspectives on education, as they were conceived in particular at the Inner London Education Authority, intended to challenge such characterisation. Multicultural education, in contrast, has been developed in response to claims for the accommodation of ethnic, religious and cultural practices. Both perspectives are not necessarily at odds: they do, however, respond to two different kinds of claims and to different understandings of 'acceptance'. On the one hand, majority representations are challenged and requests are put forward for how the mainstream should be changed to include and normalize the post-immigration presence. On the other, claims for the accommodation of ethno-religious difference are made, for religious practices to be facilitated, and for this difference to be respected. The two case studies of this second part of the report explore exemplary debates within these two domains.

In 2007, the City of Bristol organized a number of events and supported community initiatives to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Representations of the local and national past became the focus of debates. In this second part of the report, we explore the problematic commemoration of slavery in a city that is marked by public memorials for its slave-trading 'merchant venturers'. The question of how slavery should be 'commemorated', and more generally how 'Black History' should be taught and inform curricular priorities, are of interest and we discuss what toleration and acceptance may be seen to mean in how the British national (and the Bristolian local) story have been and continue to be reconsidered. Coinciding with 'Abolition 200', the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) issued a booklet with the title *Towards greater understanding* that provided a collection of various best practices of how schools could meet the demands for religious accommodation from Muslim pupils and their parents. The guidance notes caused considerable controversy and invited objection from various quarters. We examine their reception with an interest in how toleration and respect are defined in the debate about religion in state schools.

Challenges of political inclusion are considered in *the third part of the report*. Immigrants to the United Kingdom, coming predominantly from Commonwealth countries, benefited from significant political rights upon arrival. As was to be expected, political participation was generally not among the highest priorities for most newcomers. Institutional obstacles and wide-spread racism meant that formal routes into mainstream politics were less open. Beginning in the 1950s, initial mobilizations on an ethnic minority-basis were largely in response to local experiences of racial discrimination. The current competition among the three mainstream parties, Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, for ethnic minority votes is a comparatively newer phenomenon, since the Labour Party has historically been the main vehicle for post-immigration groups into formal British politics.

Despite new attention to ethnic minority voters as a result of this competition, there remain a number of questions over equitable representation and access. Political activists that highlight ethnic or religious identities tend to be portrayed as particularist, divisive or sectarian. The implication was, and to some extent still is, that in order to *be* representative and to address collective concerns, minority politicians and activists needed to undertake additional efforts. There is suspicion over their political agency which casts doubt on its legitimacy e.g., when it focuses on minority concerns or proceeds on the basis of minority identities. While such conceptions have grown weaker over the last few decades, they remain in place and reflect an environment where political representation and participation is evidently more challenging for minorities than it is for majority citizens.

In order to explore such features of the British political environment, the report considers the case of the General Election 2010 and how national-level organisations that mobilized in particular Muslim constituents conceived of their objectives and responded to pressures. The report explores a number of recurring issues, including the act of political representation, the 'Muslim Vote', and significant concerns to do with political neutrality and partisanship. While the report highlights the experience of 'misrecognition', the political positioning that is evident among the Muslim political organisations examined in this report shows that constraints are often creatively dealt with and that perceived pressures invite a significant degree of reflexivity and strategic awareness. Although the past decade has been a challenging time for confident expressions of Muslim identities in British politics, there are some indications that political actors succeed in projecting political subjectivities that are not simply determined by the experience of misrecognition. The diversity of attempts to delineate such identities, as is evident among the mobilizations examined in this part of the report, might indeed make it more difficult for Muslim political claims to be misrecognized.

The report concludes with a discussion of key findings. It considers the types of acceptance, tolerance and recognition that are at stake and explores experiences of intolerance and misrecognition. It concludes with a number of policy recommendations that emerge on the basis of its discussion of diversity challenges in education and politics.

## II. Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in the United Kingdom

### 1. Introduction

Britain is one of the most diverse societies on the globe. Its colonial legacy, together with various migratory movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has led to an unprecedented diversity of ethnicities, cultures and religions in the composition of its population. The most recent census counts 4.5 million inhabitants of ‘ethnic minority’ background (for a population of around 59 million and not counting 700,000 Irish). While the history of immigration, notably from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean, and the formation of ‘post-immigration groups’ in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been explored variously, recent patterns of immigration are more difficult to consider. Estimates for the recent arrival of Eastern European immigrants from the ‘A8’ accession countries vary, and the patterns of settlement and work such as of Poles and Lithuanians in the UK are insufficiently documented.<sup>1</sup> ‘Cultural diversity’ in Britain today is thus multifaceted, complex and located in between *old* and established patterns of post-immigration diversity and *newly* emerging patterns of immigration, settlement and cultural difference.

The presence, in particular in Britain’s urban centres, of populations marked by unprecedented diversity, has been characterised as a new form of diversity, ‘super diversity’ (Vertovec 2007) or ‘hyper diversity’ (Muir and Wetherell 2010). It is suggested that this new diversity challenges conventional assumptions about how difference should be accommodated. Accordingly, new diversity, such as the presence of people of 179 nationalities in contemporary London, is seen to imply new challenges that require new and fine-tuned political responses. ‘Super diversity’ creates “gaps between policy and practice at all levels” (Muir and Wetherell 2010, 9) and, according to Steven Vertovec (2007, 1027-8), challenges an older version of multiculturalism that fails to recognize the increasing fragmentation of difference.

While new constellations of diversity are undoubtedly significant, this picture may be incomplete. Demographic differentiation in one urban sphere does not change that significant numbers of people, and in particular those who are less visible or interesting as specimen of ‘old’ kinds of diversity, continue to subscribe to overarching identities that show no sign of abating. The *Fourth Survey*, a large quantitative study of identity patterns of British minorities, established the significance of religious identities for British Asians (Modood et al. 1997). Such shared experiences of diasporic life continue to shape identities, not least in relation to religion, for groups that are ready to mobilize around grievances and common claims and in particular when shared value commitments are seen to be under attack. ‘Super diversity’, new immigration or the emergence of ‘hybrid’ identities in one domain of British life do not discount other, more consolidated and less differentiated, group positions. The ‘diversity challenges’ that this report explores, are thus both old and new—they arise in relation to claims for respect, recognition and equality made by or on behalf of ethno-religious groups as well as in relation to newly emerging, urban and more individualized

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office figures for A8 immigrants are generally based on the number of applicants to the ‘Worker Registration Scheme’. This data suggests, for example, that 540,000 Polish citizens have been working in the UK labour market since 2004, which is very likely to be a serious underestimate (Burrell 2009). For the recent past, the same data shows a sharp drop of applications such as of more than 50% of Polish applicants between 2007 to 2008 (Home Office 2009), likely to be a result of the financial crisis.

expressions of cultural diversity.

For this purpose this report is predominantly concerned with the accommodation and more broadly the political negotiation of the difference represented by two British post-immigration communities, Black-Caribbeans and Asians, in particular British Muslims. Our concern with these two communities allows considering relevant debates on cultural diversity, claims for equality and accommodation and policy responses to such claims. In fact, most of the currently salient issues and conflicts over equality and cultural diversity can only be understood in the historical context of how these communities have made themselves heard and of how their claims and politics have been perceived as a 'challenge'. The mobilization for religious equality and for the public accommodation of religion occurs against the background of concerns that have been raised and debated since, and even before, the Rushdie Affair of 1989/90. Contemporary struggles for racial equality are connected to the historical experiences of Black Caribbeans and to the mobilization and protest in response to inequality and discrimination, such as the Brixton uprising of 1981. While we do not wish to marginalize experiences and issues that do not fit these two narratives, we believe that a discussion of the most salient 'diversity challenges' of contemporary Britain needs to begin with these accounts.

In the first part of the report we thus prepare the ground for the discussion and introduce the historical context of current cultural diversity discourses (2). We offer a brief overview of the development of British debates on national identity, of British nationality law and race relations legislation. In the second part of the report, we provide an overview of the historical presence of the two post-immigration communities we are concerned with, Black-Caribbeans and Asians (3). We are particularly interested in moments of political mobilization and when claims advanced from minority positions were considered a problem. For the first community, Black Caribbeans, this means that we are particularly interested in responses to varying problemsatisations of their presence in Britain and, in particular, in the stigma of 'black criminality'. In relation to Muslim claims, we consider in particular the mobilization around claims and grievances in relation to the accommodation of religion in public life. We then proceed to discuss what the British experience of post-immigration diversity implies for ideas of acceptance, accommodation, recognition and tolerance and consider the place and development of such notions as public values, within law and institutions, and in everyday practices (4). We suggest that Britain finds itself in a position where there is the potential for post-immigration difference not merely to be tolerated but to be actively and positively recognized and respected. Britain shows potential to move beyond a situation where diversity is only a negative challenge, requiring toleration, but is turned into a positive experience through equality and respect. This, however, remains a potential that for its achievement depends on continued effort, political willpower and pressure from below. This report thus explores 'cultural diversity challenges' with a view to positive opportunities as well as to the obstacles and contravening tendencies at hand in contemporary Britain (5).

## **2. Great Britain: State formation, national identity and citizenship**

Roy Jenkins, then British home secretary, famously defined integration in 1968 "not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance" (Jenkins 1967, 267). Jenkins' notion of respect for the differences represented by post-immigration communities forms a powerful ideal in the development of British multiculturalism. As an ideal, it hardly gives a full account of the realities of how cultural diversity has been recognized, debated and politically accommodated

in Britain. It highlights, however, that (some) British policy-makers were ready to acknowledge and positively engage with the reality of post-immigration diversity. In view of this diversity, Stuart Hall (1999) coined the notion ‘multicultural drift’ which he considers as the “unintended outcome of undirected sociological processes” geared towards an increasing visibility of post-immigration groups.<sup>2</sup> In opposition to this drift, mono-cultural and racialized conceptions of ‘Britishness’ have been and continue to be articulated and to resonate strongly with significant numbers of the British population. Adapting the title of Enoch Powell’s infamous 1968 address, the pollster Ipsos Mori, in its ‘Rivers of Blood Survey’, finds that roughly 20% of the population admit to racial prejudices whilst significantly higher numbers consider immigration and its impact a negative (MORI 2008). While the subsequent parts of this report give a more detailed account of the historical formation of ethnic minorities in Britain in between those two poles, the ideal of multiculturalism and the ‘spectre’ of homogeneous nationhood, this part prepares the ground with some numbers, an excursion into aspects of the development of British identity, of British nationality law, race relations policies and, finally, theoretical and normative perspectives on cultural diversity in Britain.

#### ***a. Data about Ethnic Minority Populations***

Reflecting the more than 200 languages spoken (CMEB, 2000: 236), the 2001 Census revealed that the British population is more ethnically diverse than ever before. Alongside the ethnic breakdown the Census shows that there are at least 1.6 million people in the United Kingdom who currently describe their religious faith as Islam. This represents 2.9% of the British population, and makes Islam the most populous faith after Christianity (72%); more numerous than Hinduism (less than 1%, numbering 559,000), Sikhism (336,000), Judaism (267,000) and Buddhism (152,000). Of the Muslim constituency, 42.5% are of Pakistani origin, 16.8% of Bangladeshi, 8.5% of Indian, and – most interestingly – 7.5% of other white. This is largely taken to mean people of Turkish, Arabic and North-African ethnic origin who do not define themselves in racial terms. It will also however include East European Muslims from Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as white Muslims from across Europe. Black-African (6.2%), Other Asian (5.8%) and British (4.1%) dominate the remaining categories of ethnic identification in the census options. Even with this heterogeneity, it is still understandable—if inadequate—that Muslims in Britain are associated first and foremost with a South Asian background, especially since they make up roughly 68% of the British Muslim population.

Britain’s ethnic minority communities are not equally distributed but concentrated in England (95.5% as 9% of the population). In 2001, 45% of the ethnic minority population resided in Greater London (19% of all residents) and another 8% in region South East of London. 13% live in the West Midlands (conurbation of Birmingham), 8% in the North West (Liverpool, Lancashire), 7% in Yorkshire and Humberside (Newcastle) and 6.3% in the East Midlands, mainly Leicester, where they represent a third of the population. There are 23 constituencies with an ethnic minority population between 40.5% (Vauxhall) and 66.3% (East Harrow) (ONS, 2003). 85% of all refugees and asylum seekers reside in London or the South West. Immigrants and ethnic minorities form distinct, recognisable communities.

British public opinion generally seems appreciative of the fact of cultural diversity (MORI 2005), with a majority (77%) disagreeing with the statement that ‘to be truly British you have to be white’, though 18% agree (MORI 2009). Positive attitudes towards diversity however

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2 Hall (1999) contrasts this drift with the ‘banal’ realities of everyday repression and discrimination, as exemplified by ‘sus’ laws (see below).

do not necessarily translate into support for multiculturalism. This might also be a result of the dichotomous framing of issues in public discourse (that is replicated in survey questions), such as a contrast between ‘celebrating diverse values’ (27%) and ‘developing a shared identity’ (41%) (MORI 2009, 3). What this then shows is a wide-spread appreciation of the fact of cultural diversity and a decline of colour racism that is particularly stark in its historical dimension (Park et al. 2010). However, this positive spirit does not equally extend to a more specific attitudes of respect for concrete manifestations of diversity, such as respect for religious identities (Voas and Ling 2010).

*Table 1: British population by ethnicity*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Born Overseas</b>	<b>% of total population</b>	<b>% of all ethnic minorities</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>58.789.194</b>	4.900.000	100	
<b>White</b>	<b>54.153.898</b>		92.4	
Irish	691.000		1.0	
<b>All ethnic minorities</b>	<b>4.635.296</b>		7.9	
<i>Mixed</i>	<i>677.117</i>		<i>1.15</i>	<i>11.0</i>
<i>All black</i>	<i>1.148.738</i>		<i>1.95</i>	
Black Caribbean	565.876	238.000	1.0	13.6
Black African	485.277	322.000	0.9	12.9
Black Other	97.585		0.1	1.5
<i>All Asian</i>	<i>2.331.423</i>		<i>3.97</i>	
Indian	1.053.411	570.000	1.7	21.7
Pakistani	747.285	336.000	1.3	16.7
Bangladeshi	283.063	152.000	0.5	6.1
Chinese	247.403	176.000	0.42	4.2
<i>Other Asian</i>	<i>247.664</i>		<i>0.4</i>	<i>4.7</i>
<i>Other Ethnic</i>	<i>230.615</i>		<i>0.39</i>	<i>7.4</i>

Source: Census 2001<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The next census is scheduled for 2011 and will be available on <http://2011.census.gov.uk/>. See Appendix 1 for more current though less detailed data on ethnic diversity in England and Wales.

### ***b. British National Identity***

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland came into being in a series of treaties between its constituent nations, England and Wales in 1536, with Scotland in 1707 and with Ireland, thus formalizing its long-standing occupation, in 1801. Not dissimilar to other nation states, its creation involved political, administrative and imaginative efforts. Such efforts, however, had to take account of the fact of internal diversity, represented by the United Kingdom's constituent nations of England, Scotland, Wales and (Northern) Ireland, and the legacy of empire.

Linda Colley (1992) suggests that British national identity, based on a Protestant culture and in opposition to Catholicism within and to the Catholic powers on the continent, was forged in relation to religious 'Otherness' and to the difference represented by the vast overseas territories of the colonial empire. Such repertoires of identity have been lost along with the empire and in line with the declining political salience of Protestant religious identification.<sup>4</sup> Devolution and the resurgence of national identities in Wales and Scotland have further put into question what a source of British identification might be.<sup>5</sup> This sense of uncertainty about the content of British national identity has recently become the point of departure for political attempts to give new meaning to what it means to be British.

This has been a concern for Gordon Brown (2005; Green Paper 2007) who in numerous public statements since 2005 made the case for a new emphasis on 'Britishness'. The content of 'Britishness', however, appears somewhat undecided.<sup>6</sup> The definition of particularities that invite identification seems difficult. Historically, internal diversity had often remained unacknowledged (Pocock 1975; Crick 2008) and attributes that were considered British had been revealed as mere generalizations of cultural Englishness. Englishness, however, will be less than welcome in Scotland and Wales, and a comprehensive set of cultural attributes might be perceived as an obstacle in the way of post-immigration communities to subscribe to the idea of a national identity.

### ***c. Citizenship and Immigration Law***

Similar to the difficult negotiation of British identity, British citizenship had to catch up with changing conceptualisations of the nation state and with the legacy of the empire. One such legacy was the tension between broad principles of citizenship, which with the British Nationality Act 1948 granted some 800 million subjects the right to entry and settlement on the British Isles, and the growing salience of anti-immigrant sentiment. The 1948 Act created the category of 'Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies' (CUKC) and encompassed all formerly or presently dependent, and now Commonwealth, territories (regardless of whether passports were issued by independent or colonial states).

One outcome was Caribbean immigration as migrants from the Caribbean were invited and

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4 Even though some commentators highlight how the 'phantom pains' of the lost empire continue to underpin predominant conceptions of British identity (Gilroy 2004).

5 Recent survey data points to a relative decline of British national pride and attributes its causes to generational change (Tilley and Heath 2007). However, data equally shows that British self-descriptions, in addition to sub-national identities, persist across the UK and that, by international comparison, levels of national pride are fairly strong (Heath and Roberts 2009; Uberoi and McLean 2009).

6 Brown (2005) pointed in particular to values of "freedom, responsibility and fairness". The new government with David Cameron has thus far not contributed to the Britishness agenda. This might be a result of the intricate tensions that appear to make it easier for a Scottish Labour politician to devise and placate Britishness than it would be for an English Tory (Runciman 2010).



recruited to assist in post-war reconstruction. During Winston Churchill's post-war Caribbean tour, for example, he famously appealed to Jamaicans to "Come and help rebuild your Motherland!" (quoted in Murphy 1989, 88), whilst London Transport and the British Hotels and Restaurants Association set up recruiting offices in Barbados (ibid).

Table 2: Main Minority and Immigrant Groups in Britain and their Dimensions of Difference

Dimensions of difference	Citizenship	Racial	Ethnic	Religious	Cultural	Linguistic
<b>Native minorities</b>						
Welsh						X <sup>7</sup>
Scots						
Irish						
<b>Immigrants</b>						
Bangladeshis		X	X	X	X	X
Indians		X	X	X	X	X
Pakistanis		X	X	X	X	X
Black Caribbeans		X	X		X	
Africans	X	X	X	X	X	
'A8' Countries	X				X	X
Roma	X	X	X	X	X	X

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act discarded the principle of free entry for CUKC persons and introduced work voucher quotas. It continued to permit free entry only to those CUKC whose passports had been issued in Britain and not by a dependent or protectorate territory. Later, the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act restricted the unqualified right of British passport holding former dependents to enter the UK whilst the 1971 Immigration Act implemented a combination of *ius soli* (citizenship by territory) and *ius sanguine* (citizenship by descent) in order to severely curtail primary Commonwealth immigration by establishing a "partiality" clause (or the right to abode) as the legal basis of rightful belonging. Instead of replacing the CUKC with an exclusive definition of British citizenship, the Act put Commonwealth immigrants on the same legal footing as other aliens whilst prioritising entry

<sup>7</sup> The most recent survey finds that roughly 22% of all those residing in Wales, about 600,000 people, had some knowledge of the Welsh language. 57% of those considered themselves fluent speakers (Welsh Language Board 2006).

from the ‘old Commonwealth’ if people from Australia, Canada and New Zealand could demonstrate British lineage (and others such as Anglo-Indians). The 1981 Nationality Act later withdrew a right to settlement to most Commonwealth citizens.

#### ***d. Race-Relations Legislation***

The history of citizenship and immigration law thus shows a transition from imperial subjecthood to a ‘normalized’ version of national citizenship, Britain’s racial equality agenda was developed in the context of such restrictions. In the first place, it took some time for policy makers to recognize that racial discrimination constituted an embarrassment and a normative, political and legal problem.<sup>8</sup> In the 1960s, the ‘colour bar’ in British society, the widespread and open discrimination on grounds of race was increasingly perceived as a problem. The connection to restrictions of immigration rules was, as the Labour politician Roy Hattersley MP suggested, that “[w]ithout integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible”. The outset of the British racial equality agenda was thus conditionally tied to restrictions of immigration.

There has been legislation in United Kingdom outlawing discrimination on racial grounds since the mid-sixties. The Race Relations Act 1965 introduced relatively moderate legislation outlawing discrimination, based upon colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origins, but not on grounds of religion or belief, such as in relation to access to premises open to the public such as hotels, bars and restaurants. Three years later, and running parallel to the aforementioned Commonwealth Immigration Act 1968, an additional Race Relations Act (1968) extended protection to employment, housing, education and the provision of further goods, facilities and services. The main legislation currently in force is the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended in 2000, which provides individuals with the right to bring civil proceedings for discrimination, defines permitted ‘positive action’<sup>9</sup>, established the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and covers all areas of employment, education, housing and, more recently, urban planning.

This legislation was substantially strengthened by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 after the inquiry into the London Metropolitan Police investigation of the murdered black teenager Stephen Lawrence, which extended its scope to cover nearly all functions of public authorities (for the first time including the police but still excluding the immigration service), simultaneously widening the remit of the statutory duty of public authorities to promote race equality. The way in which this Act relates to the longer history of British colour racism and, in particular, to the theme of ‘black criminality’ will be one of the concerns of the following (see 3.b), as well as the more recent efforts to update the equality agenda with the Equalities Act 2010 (3.c).

#### ***e. Multiculture and ethno-religious identities***

There are contending perspectives on cultural diversity in Britain. The ‘super diversity’ theme that we have introduced previously points to a fragmentation of difference, as the sheer diversity of the various minority groups makes it difficult to lump them together. It contrasts

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8 Churchill remarked in this regard that “the laws of this country are well known, and ... there is no need for new instructions” (quoted in Hiro 1992, 209)

9 The duty given to public authorities, under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and ‘good relations’ between people from different racial groups.

with a continued interest in groups, their claims and their political agency. A related tension exists between, on one hand, ‘multiculture’ that prioritises practices of mixing and hybridity, and, on the other, a perspective that considers and takes seriously claims geared towards the preservation of difference.

‘Multiculture’ has been coined in relation to situations of everyday cultural and ethnic diversity, ‘conviviality’ and particularly the Black-Caribbean experience in Britain. It captures moments of contact, mixing, cultural exchange and interaction often in, but not restricted to, urban settings. It is concerned with the hybridisation of culture and the creation of cultural and social spaces that allow for relatively effortless encounters. ‘Multiculture’ is generally not introduced as a programme of social change that would lend itself to implementation by policy makers and in public institutions. Paul Gilroy (1995, 4) suggests that it is not a “clearly delineated goal or a reified state”; rather, it is something that happens in the microcosm of urban life. It consists of the “promise and hetero-cultural dynamism of contemporary metropolitan life” (ibid).

While the history of immigration in the United Kingdom is one of hybridity and cultural change, it is equally marked by attempts to maintain ideas and practices, or to change them in a way that preserves the core of what is considered valuable. Where the goal of ‘multiculture’ is to transcend the mere presence of cultural difference in favour of a hybridization of minority and majority culture, the claims of ethno-religious difference are for public spaces that allow for, refrain from penalizing, and, ideally, respect the simultaneous assertion of claims for difference and inclusion. The goal is to transform the public sphere in order to turn negative into positive difference and to allow for the expression of religious beliefs and the accommodation of religious practices in the public rather than their confinement in the private realm (Modood 2007).

### **3. Cultural diversity challenges**

In Britain the distinction between ‘multiculture’ and ethno-religious difference is despite the fact that a conventional view had assumed a unity of experience, claims and politics. With the fracturing of ‘political blackness’ in the late 1980s and in the course of a new Muslim assertiveness dissimilarities between the politics of minority groups became more apparent. Such dissimilarities have challenged the idea of a unified politics of multiculturalism and so they also challenge a one-size-fits-all type of tolerance.

This part of the report investigates how both types of differences have been made and re-made. It is concerned with moments of correspondence and separation and with coalition-building and political antagonism. It does not claim that the experience of Black-Caribbeans is synonymous with ‘multiculture’ while the claims of British Muslims correspond, in each and every case, with the preservation of ethno-religious difference. It does, however, suggest that the way British multiculturalism has developed over the last decades makes it reasonable to discuss ‘multiculture’ with reference to the Black-Caribbean experience and ethno-religious diversity with reference to British Muslims.

We need to take account of the Black-Caribbean presence and the Asian, and in particular Muslim, presence in the United Kingdom and of the claims to public accommodation and tolerance that have been put forward by members of these groups. The discussion is organised along three periods, 1948-1989 (with emphasis on the 1980s), 1989-2001 and from 2001 onwards. Rather than offering a detailed chronology and an in-depth account of post-immigration communities in Britain, it highlights crucial events of political mobilization that

paved the way for new politicizations of difference, new grievances and new claims. Finally, it highlights social practices of ‘racial mixing’ and religious claims-making, in particular in the area of public education, and attempts a snapshot of the various responses such practices have elicited by majority society.

***a. 1948-1989: The development of post-immigration communities***

The British experience of ‘coloured immigration’ has been seen as an Atlantocentric legacy of the slave trade, and policy and legislation were formed in the 1960s in the shadow of the US civil rights movement, black power discourse and the inner-city riots in Detroit, Watts and elsewhere. It was, therefore, dominated by the idea of ‘race’, more specifically by the idea of a black-white dualism.

It was also shaped by the imperial legacy, one aspect of which was that all colonials and citizens of the Commonwealth were ‘subjects of the Crown’. As such they had rights of entry into the UK and entitlement to all the benefits enjoyed by Britons, from NHS treatment to social security and the vote. (The right to entry was successively curtailed from 1962 so that, while in 1960 Britain was open to the Commonwealth but closed to Europe, twenty years later the position was fully reversed.)

Socio-economically, ethnic minorities entered British society at the bottom. The need in Britain was for cheap, unskilled labour to perform those jobs in an expanding economy which white people no longer wished to do, and the bulk of the immigration occurred in response to this need. Research from the 1960s onwards established quite clearly that non-white people had a much worse socio-economic profile than white people and that racial discrimination was one of the principal causes.

Anti-discrimination legislation was introduced in 1965 and strengthened in 1968 and 1976. While this eliminated the open discrimination that was common up to that time (the ‘colour bar’), it did not mitigate its various less visible forms. The public appeal of anti-immigration rhetoric, its emphasis on themes of cultural incompatibility and conflict (Enoch Powell’s Rivers of Blood address; Britain, according to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, being ‘swamped’ by immigrants), did not contribute to an atmosphere of respect towards post-immigration communities. In line with anxieties over immigration that were (and are) open to be mobilized, the extension of racial equality was connected to restriction of entry: “without integration, limitation is inexcusable; without limitation, integration is impossible” (Roy Hattersley).

Even though this logic furthered the expansion of rights for those post-immigration groups already present, it did nothing to change that the presence of ethnic minorities was seen as a problem. Despite the abolition of the open “colour bar”, racism persisted in crude and polite forms (Fenton 1999). The history of Britain as an immigration country is thus not only one of accommodation and increasing equality for settled communities, but also one of the changing ways in which the presence of ethnic minority groups is considered problematic.

***African Caribbeans***

A symbolic moment in the beginning Black-Caribbean presence was the landing of the *S.S. Empire Windrush* in June 1948 with 491 Jamaicans on board responding to appeals by Winston Churchill, amongst others, to come help ‘rebuild the Motherland’. Annual arrivals from 1948 to 1952 numbered under 27,550. For several reasons including the United States Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (1952) (also known as the McCarran-Walter Act)

curbing Caribbean emigration to the US; economic and political instability accompanying immediate decolonization; and the growing threat of immigration legislation in Britain, a dominant view arose that prospective immigrants had to leave the Caribbean immediately – ‘to beat the ban’ (Hiro 1992) - or not at all. By 1960 annual arrivals rose to 49,650 before increasing to 66,300 during the following year. By the time the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was introduced the number had decreased to 31,800. Soon after arrivals from the Caribbean numbered only 3,241 in 1963, but peaked at 14,848 in 1965 before falling rapidly to less than 10,000 in the average year. By 1976 the Caribbean immigrant and post-immigrant population had reached half a million people.

Black-Caribbeans arriving in Britain were highly anglicized (Hiro 1992, 19-25). Nonetheless, they encountered a hostile environment with ‘No Coloured’ or ‘Europeans only’ signs in frequent display. The ‘colour bar’ in British society and widespread attitudes of hostility made the early presence of Black-Caribbeans, and their position in employment, housing and public services, marginal and problematic (Collins 2001). The characterization of what made their presence problematic, however, changed over time. In line with biological racism and powerful cultural conceptions, ‘miscegenation’, racial mixing and inter-ethnic partnering, was one such problem account.<sup>10</sup> Laziness, drug use, prostitution and disease were additional notions applied in public discourse to characterize the Black-Caribbean population (Gilroy 2002). The 1970s saw in particular the discovery of ‘black criminality’ (see below).

The anti-racist mobilization of the 1980s, as well as various outbreaks of urban unrest (‘race riots’), was not least in response to the discriminatory exercise of police powers towards black people. Conflicts occurred frequently in the proximity of youth clubs, parties, reggae festivals and local fairs when police intervened to ‘restore order’. Observing that public disorder often broke out around such venues, a memorandum by the London police force, the Met, remarked in 1976 with a measure of surprise that “members of London’s West Indian community do appear to share a group consciousness” (quoted in Gilroy 2002, 118).

Inspired by the politicisation of black cultural expression and black pride in the United States, the quest for self-affirmation and the celebration of black identity occurred in the context of a discovery of new types of expression in art, music and literature. Arguably, the gradual normalization of the Black-Caribbean presence in Britain is closely connected to the development of these cultural forms and to their adoption in majority youth and popular culture (Gilroy 2002, 204-5). This route, however, has not been without setbacks and contradictions. In particular, the appeal of black culture and the development of hybrid cultural forms in black urban Britain did not mean that prejudices vanished, as, for example, in relation to how the theme of ‘black criminality’ became a widespread image in the media and public representation in the course of the 1970s (Hall et al. 1978).

### *Asians*

The British Asian presence in the United Kingdom is a result of labour migration in the 1950s and 1960s, of the expulsion of Indians from East Africa in the early 1970s, and of the family unification that continued after the restrictions of the late 1960s and up to the mid-1980s. While ‘Asian’ refers to South Asian and, in particular, to Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi

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10 The Notting Hill riots of 1958 were triggered off by white men protesting against the fraternisation of black men and white women, and while the first day involved indiscriminate violence against black people, it is symptomatic that the second day of violence began with an attack on a Swedish woman, Majbritt Morrison, that had been spotted the previous day with her Jamaican husband, Ray Morrison.

origins, the label covers a variety of backgrounds. It includes Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims as well as a variety of languages or dialects. It entails a variety of local backgrounds that are of importance for understanding how patterns of kinship and solidarity impact on political mobilization.

While the majority of Indians is of Punjabi or Gujarati background, some London boroughs, in particular Southall, are home to large numbers of Sikhs. Bradford Muslims, for example, originate in particular from the Mirpur district of Pakistani Kashmir. Diverse patterns of local settlement and the variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds point to difficulties with the label 'Asian'. 'Political blackness' as a designator for shared Black and Asian experiences came under increasing strain in the course of the 1980s.

The category 'Asian', in turn, encompasses a variety of experiences and position that made this label too appear rather loose and increasingly meaningless for an understanding of political mobilization among differentiated communities. Majority perceptions of the difference represented by Asians and black Caribbeans further served to separate the two. Michael Banton (1979, 242) captured such changing problematisations of difference in earlier decades of the post-immigration presence.

[T]he English seemed to display more hostility towards the West Indians because they sought a greater degree of acceptance than the English wished to accord; in more recent times there seemed to have been more hostility towards Asians because they are insufficiently inclined to adopt the English ways.

More recently, Pnina Werbner (2004, 899) points to a further, internal differentiation that leads her to identify two diasporic spheres of British Asianness: "Whereas Asians are perceived to be integrating positively into Britain, contributing a welcome spiciness and novelty to British culture, Muslims are regarded as an alienated, problematic minority." In addition, Werbner suggests that the way differences are negotiated within Asian communities is muddled and conflictual. Intellectuals and artists within the minority groups challenge customs and traditional structures of authority. Their contributions, such as Salman Rushdie's writings or movies like *Bend it like Beckham* not only give accounts of the negotiation of difference in minority groups but are increasingly well received by British majority society.

This hybrid and, in Werbner's terms, "impure" sphere of British Asianness contrasts with a second sphere of diaspora where differences are preserved and kinship groups continue to play a significant role. The average Pakistani in Britain, for instance, feels a sense of not only belonging to an extended family but also to a *birādari* (kinship group) of which a branch is in Britain but the centre of which is in Pakistan (Shaw 2000).

Such patterns and practices, for Pakistanis and other South Asian groups, are neither stable nor deterministic of individual behaviour. They do however constitute repertoires of identification that continue to be meaningful and important for significant numbers of people. For British Muslims such differences of kinship groups and the diversity of cultures, languages and national backgrounds have meant that a homogeneous version of British Islam has not emerged, nor is it likely that it will. Nonetheless, shared belief (as well as the shared experience of rejection on grounds of belief) have meant that in recent years Muslim identity has become increasingly salient.

### *Political Blackness*

While the politics of difference in the United Kingdom underpins various kinds of political

claims and types of cultural expression, there has been considerable reluctance to differentiate. The categories of 'political blackness' proceeded from the idea of a shared experience of discrimination across ethnic and religious backgrounds. The British population was thus divided into two groups, black and white. The former consisted of all those people who were potential victims of colour racism, though in both theory and practice they were assumed disproportionately to have the characteristics of the African-Caribbean population (Modood 1994). Thus a fundamental problem for political blackness came from an internal ambivalence, namely whether blackness as a political identity was sufficiently distinct from and could mobilize without blackness as an ethnic pride movement of people of African descent. This black identity movement, in a growing climate of opinion favourable to identity politics of various kinds, was successful in shifting the terms of the debate from colour-blind individualistic assimilation to questions about how white British society had to change to accommodate new groups.

But its success in imposing a singular identity upon a diverse ethnic minority population was temporary and illusory. What it did was pave the way to a plural ethnic assertiveness, as South Asian groups, including Muslims, borrowed the logic of ethnic pride and tried to catch up with the success of a newly legitimized black public identity. Indeed, it is best to see this development of racial explicitness and positive blackness as part of a wider socio-political climate which is not confined to race and culture or non-white minorities. Feminism, gay pride, Quebecois nationalism, and the revival of Scottishness are some prominent examples of these new identity movements which have come to be an important feature in many countries, especially those in which class politics has declined.

While anti-racism and political multiculturalism in the period up to the late 1980s operated and mobilized with reference to a unified position of 'political blackness', this position turned out less and less suitable for the actual issues of anti-racist concern. This became more apparent in the course of Brixton riots of 1981 and the 'Honeyford affair' of 1986.

### *New Cross Fire and Brixton Riots*

We have already suggested that the Black-Caribbean presence in Britain has been associated with various and changing types of problems. 'Miscegenation' was one such problem account that we will return to below. Another one was black criminality. This theme was developed and extended in the course of the 1970s (Hall et al. 1978; Gilroy 2002, Ch. 3). In particular low-level street criminality, mugging, was framed as a quintessentially black type of deviance. The police response was to identify 'high risk' neighbourhoods in which it would come down in a heavy-handed manner, using stop and search laws (so-called 'sus' laws) in a fashion that amounted, frequently, to racial profiling. The insensitivity, if not downright racism, of such operations precipitated hostility towards the police.

While 'sus' operations created tensions in a variety of British communities, 1981 saw a heightening of such tensions in London. A fire in New Cross, south-east London, that led to the death of thirteen black teenagers marked the starting point for remarkable episodes of unrest. It is contested whether, in an area known for racist attacks, the fire was deliberately set off or the result of an accident. It is clear, however, that the police reacted with insensitivity and indifference. The New Cross Fire, or—for those who took it to be arson—the New Cross Massacre, became the single largest moment of political mobilization, with 20,000 protestors marching through London (Howe 1999). Together with Operation Swamp '81, a particularly intrusive, heavy handed stop-and-search operation by the London Metropolitan Police (the 'Met') in Brixton, it marked the context of some of the most significant episodes of urban

unrest in recent British history.

The Brixton riots of 1981, together with various other episodes of unrest such as in St. Pauls (Bristol), Toxteth (Liverpool), Chapeltown (Leeds) and Handsworth (Birmingham) are frequently regarded as a turning point in British race-relations as they brought into focus the response of newly assertive youth cultures to the experience of racism and deprivation. The Brixton unrest became the subject of an inquiry chaired by Lord Scarman. Identifying the immediate causes of the riots, the inquiry pointed to “spontaneous act of defiant aggression by young men who felt themselves hunted by a hostile police force” (Scarman 1986, 46).

Controversially for those who subscribed to the notion of ‘high risk neighbourhoods’ to justify ‘sus’ operations, it thus took notice of how police operations and discriminatory stop-and-search practices had prepared the ground for discontent. In its further diagnosis, however, Scarman fell short in identifying more fundamental causes for the police conduct: how, institutionally, the theme of ‘black criminality’ permeated the Met and made heavy-handed and discriminatory policing the natural response to the ‘problematic’ nature of the Black-Caribbean community (Solomos 1999). The report noted how economic deprivation had facilitated the unrest and it advocated a programme of urban renewal that, due to a lack of funding, did not yield tangible results.

### *The Honeyford Affair*

An early conflict in which racial equality, ethnicity, and religion came to be combined was ‘the Honeyford Affair’ (Halstead 1988). Ray Honeyford was headteacher of a Bradford local authority school in which the majority of pupils were of Pakistani descent and Muslim. In a series of articles in 1983–4 in a national right-wing journal, the *Salisbury Review*, he argued that the education of children such as those in his school was being stifled by the cultural and religious practices of their parents. These, he argued, prevented Pakistani ethnicity children, especially girls, from becoming proficient in English, participating in the full curriculum (e.g. in sport, dance, and drama), from socializing with whites, and from succeeding fully in British education and society. He was particularly critical of what he said was the widespread practice of Pakistani parents taking or sending their children to Pakistan for weeks or months at a time, disregarding the school calendar. These comments—many of which were indeed the concerns of educationalists—were presented in an extremely critical, generalizing way that portrayed Pakistani working-class culture and aspects of Islam in a negative way and were augmented by comments about Pakistan as ‘obstinately backward’, plagued by ‘corruption at every level’, and the ‘heroin capital of the world’ (Honeyford 1984).

The articles were judged as racist by white anti-racists, locally and nationally, and some secular Asian activists, who initiated a call for Honeyford’s resignation, which soon came to be supported by most of the parents and the leading local Muslim organizations, including the Bradford Council of Mosques. The Bradford Pakistani community were agitated by the public airing of unflattering comments about them, exacerbated by the distribution of Urdu translations of Honeyford’s views by his opponents (Samad 1992, 513).

These communities, largely from of peasant Kashmiri background, culturally more conservative, and influenced by ties of kinship, began to stand up for itself against what it perceived to be insults to its culture and to its religious restrictions, especially as they applied to gender and sexuality. Leftwing anti-racists therefore came to mobilize alongside conservative Pakistanis on the issue of community honour and in due course the alliance was successful and Honeyford was pressured into early retirement. The wider and longer-term



effect of the alliance and of other local developments of the time was to develop the Pakistani community, especially the mosque leadership, as a political force in Bradford, at the expense of white anti-racists and others rooted in a secular, multi-ethnic coalition, as the former considerably outnumbered the latter (Samad 1992).

The Honeyford Affair suggests that, by the late 1980s, the label of ‘political blackness’ had become increasingly unsustainable. Indeed, political blackness was unravelling at a grass-roots level at the very time that it was becoming hegemonic as a race relations discourse in British public life (see Modood 1994).

#### ***b. 1989-2001: New ethnicities, new claims, new politics***

While earlier events had shown cracks in the coalition, subsequent moments of political mobilization showed the extent to which claims and grievances of different ethnic minority groups in British society developed along different trajectories. In the period from 1989 and 2001, the Rushdie affair and the murder of Stephen Lawrence are two such moments of particular visibility.

##### *The ‘Rushdie Affair’*

The single event that most dramatically illustrated the emergence of new forms of ethno-religious actors—with again Bradford a scene of action, and damaged honour a cause of mobilization—was the battle over the novel, *The Satanic Verses* (SV), that broke out in 1988–9, with Muslims protesting its portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad and other revered figures. This time the secular anti-racists were virtually absent from the conflict, for while many were sensitive to the racial stereotyping and divisions it was causing, they were unhappy that it was fuelled by religious anger (Modood 1989). Above all they saw it as a case in which freedom of speech should not be compromised, but reluctant to join in the chorus against Muslims they mainly kept a low profile.

On the Muslim side, however, it generated an impassioned activism and mobilization on a scale greater than any previous national campaign against racism (Modood 1990; 2005). Many ‘lapsed’ or ‘passive’ Muslims (Muslims, especially, the non-religious, for whom hitherto their Muslim background was not particularly important) (re)discovered a new community solidarity and public identity. This is movingly described by the author Rana Kabbani, whose *Letter to Christendom* begins with a description of herself as ‘a woman who had been a sort of underground Muslim before she was forced into the open by the Salman Rushdie affair’ (Kabbani 1989, ix).

What was striking was that when the public rage against Muslims was at its most intense, Muslims neither sought nor were offered any special solidarity by any non-white minority. It was in fact some white liberal Anglicans that tried to moderate the hostility against the angry Muslims, and it was inter-faith forums than political-black organizations that tried to create space where Muslims could state their case without being vilified.

Political blackness—seen up to then as the key formation in the politics of post-immigration ethnicity—was seen as irrelevant to an issue which many Muslims insisted was fundamental to defining the kind of ‘respect’ or ‘civility’ appropriate to a peaceful multicultural society, that is to say, to the political constitution of ‘difference’ in Britain (Modood 2005). The SV affair, then, divided anti-racists and egalitarians, giving rise to organizations like Women Against Fundamentalists, an offshoot of Southall Black Sisters, who turned up at Muslim demonstrations to publicly express their support for Rushdie. Other egalitarians tried to

assimilate Muslim concerns into the equality movement and to some extent this division has since become a feature within the broad politics of ‘multiculturalism’ in Britain (for an attempt at reconciliation, see Phillips 2007).

### *Stephen Lawrence and the Macpherson Inquiry*

On 22 April 1993, a black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, was stabbed to death while waiting for the bus in Eltham, South-East London. Even though the attack was visibly racist in motivation, the Met operated under the assumption that drug-related violence among teenagers had led to the stabbing. The failure to consider evidence that did not accord with the foregone conclusion that an altercation among criminals had taken place meant that the five suspects were never successfully prosecuted (the testimony of Lawrence’s friend, Duwayne Brooks, who had been present during the attack was dismissed).

The murder of Stephen Lawrence, and the police handling of the inquiry, thus pointed to, as Stuart Hall (1999, 189) suggested “how racialized difference is ... negotiated at a deeper level, where unreconstructed attitudes find a sort of displaced but systematic expression in places which the utopian language of ‘multicultural Britain’ cannot reach.” Only the efforts of Stephen Lawrence’s parents in pressing for an investigation into the murder of their son kept the issue alive in the following years, until the scandal attracted attention in the broader public and the mainstream media (Daily Mail).

An inquiry, commissioned by Home Secretary Jack Straw (promised when Labour were in opposition) and chaired by Sir William Macpherson, to investigate the Metropolitan Police’s handling of the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, detected both “incompetence and racism” (Macpherson 1999, para. 2.11) and noted the “hitherto underplayed dissatisfaction and unhappiness of minority ethnic communities [...] as to their treatment by police” (Macpherson 1999, para 2.15).

‘Institutional racism’, though no individually attributable racist conduct, were seen to prevail in some branches of the police and the report highlighted “the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin” (Macpherson 1999, para. 6.34). Home Secretary Jack Straw promised to make the report a watershed (see McLaughlin and Murji 1999), and introduced the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 that imposed a set of obligations on public authorities to deal with internal discrimination and institutional racism (Schuster and Solomos 2004).

There are continuing concerns about the disproportionate exercise of stop and search powers against black and Asian people (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2010).<sup>11</sup> However, the years from Stephen Lawrence’s murder and since the adoption of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 have seen institutional discrimination on grounds of colour become an established concern. This has led some commentators, for example Trevor Phillips (2009) and John Denham (Department for Communities and Local Government 2009), to diagnose the end of racism in Britain. While the last two decades have indeed seen great strides forward in combating discrimination on grounds of colour, such statements are blind to different forms of racism that do not fit the colour schema.

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, the most recent data for 2008/9 shows persistent inequities and, in fact, a significant deterioration in the way towards stop and search ‘equity’. Nationwide, black people are seven times more likely, and Asian two times, to be stopped and searched. Avon and Somerset, where black people are 9.1 more likely to be stopped and searched, is at the top of the league (Ministry of Justice 2010; Travis 2010).

Considering black/police relations from Scarman to Macpherson, Stuart Hall pointed to processes of “differentiation” among ethnic minority groups. With reference to findings from the Fourth Survey (Modood et al. 1997), Hall noted that such processes undermined the

tired notion of an undifferentiated block of 'ethnic minority' people, homogenously characterized by their 'otherness' (Them), versus an equally homogeneous white 'majority' (Us) to whose unified culture and 'way of life' the former must assimilate or perish. These fundamentally binary terms in which British race relations have been mapped have essentially collapsed. (Hall 1999, 191)

The discontent that had been articulated on the streets of Brixton was, in short, not what brought Muslims to the streets of Bradford. While this does not mean that, in principle, solidarity between such groups should have been impossible, it highlights that ‘political blackness’ did not lend itself as a unifying theme, particularly in light of new types of Muslim political mobilization. In a very short space of time ‘Muslim’ became a key political minority identity, acknowledged by Right and Left, bigots and the open-minded, the media and the government. This politics has meant not just a recognition of a new religious diversity in Britain but a new or renewed policy importance for religion.

### *c. Since 2001: Cohesion, Equality and Islamophobia*

Turning to contemporary conditions of racial equality and ethno-religious accommodation, various forces seem to be at play. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 revealed a strong commitment on the part of the Labour government to extend and consolidate the field of racial equality. This commitment coincided with a new accentuation of civic commonality and shared lives, a priority that was reflected in the turn towards the concept of ‘community cohesion’. In the summer of 2001 various episodes of unrest in the north of England, and the involvement of young British Muslims in this violence, were generally seen as a case for how previous strategies of multicultural accommodation had led to separateness and segregation. This was then diagnosed as a root cause of unrest, an explanation that could be extended to cover, in 2005, the bombing of London buses and underground services.

#### *Community Cohesion and the ‘Civic Turn’*

In the summer of 2001 after civil unrest and 'rioting' that had taken place in some northern towns, home to both a small and large number of Muslims, David Blunkett (2001, 3) stated that 'one of this government's central aims is to achieve a society that celebrates its ethnic diversity and cultural richness; where there is respect for all, regardless of race, colour or creed'. In the same statement he gave notice of Home Office-funded teams which would 'undertake an urgent review over the summer of all relevant community issues' (Blunkett, 2001, 3). A contemporaneous local Bradford report set the pattern for official questioning of multiculturalism by arguing that particular communities, widely understood as Muslim communities, were self-segregating (Ouseley Report, 2001), an alleged tendency that was described in another report as the phenomenon of leading 'parallel lives' (Cantle, 2001).

In charging Muslim communities with self-segregating and adopting isolationist practices under a pretence of multiculturalism (for an analysis see Hussain and Bagguley, 2005), these reports pioneered an approach found in other post-riot accounts, and which provided many influential commentators with the licence, not necessarily supported by the specific substance of each report, to critique Muslim distinctiveness in particular and multiculturalism in general.

This has given rise to discourses of 'community cohesion' and a greater emphasis upon the civic aspects of integration, which have increasingly competed and sought to 're-balance' the recognition of diversity in previous discourse and policy (Meer and Modood 2009).

It is also important to understand, however, that in contrast to the 'civic turn' in much of North West Europe, the original interest in civic matters in Britain was not stirred by Muslim political claims-making. For following New Labour's general election victory in 1997 a range of key actors, including politicians, pundits, academics, think-tanks and pressure groups, become increasingly concerned about a range of different problems, *of which civic integration/participation was only one*, but which mapped neatly onto the concerns of then salient social capital theorists such as Putnam with issues around trust, norms and networks (Kisby 2006).

These perceived problems included concerns about a 'democratic deficit' and low voter turnout and, in particular, about civic and political disengagement and cynicism among young people. And it is for this reason that citizenship was revived as an educational issue. What needs to be understood is that issues of Muslim integration initially came to rest in this mould before the mould would be later re-cast. Thus when the term 'community cohesion' enters the lexicon, following an inquiry into civil unrest or 'rioting' in some Muslim areas in the North of England, the commissioners conceive it as encompassing a 'domain of social capital' which facilitates 'people [to] feel connected to their co-residents' (Cantle 2001, 74).

### *Equality and Non-discrimination*

We note the different trajectories charted in the legal system between those characterized as racial minorities and those conceived in religious terms. This is something that has potentially left Muslims vulnerable because, while discrimination against yarmulke-wearing Jews and turban-wearing Sikhs was deemed to be unlawful *racial* discrimination, Muslims, unlike these other faith communities, are not deemed to be a racial or ethnic grouping. Nor are they protected by the legislation against religious discrimination that did exist in one part of the UK: being explicitly designed to protect Catholics, it covers only Northern Ireland.

Similarly, incitement to religious hatred was unlawful only in Northern Ireland, while the offence of incitement to racial hatred, which extended protection to certain forms of anti-Jewish literature, did not apply to anti-Muslim literature. Many years after this complaint was first raised, the hand of the British government was forced by Article 13 of the EU Amsterdam Treaty (1999), which issued the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations of 2003 which made discrimination on the grounds of religious belief illegal in the labour market, but fell short of demands for a wider social protection against incitement to religious hatred.

Of course while the directive was issued by the EC, it has been argued that it's provenance in British and Dutch models such that "in effect, the British framework has been 'uploaded' to EU level" (Geddes and Guiraudon 2008, 129). Indeed, it was not only the British but also some variation of the Dutch model, both of which are "linked to a network of actors including NGOs and academic activists with good links to European institutions, particularly the Commission and the Parliament" (ibid. 133). The Anglo-Dutch led Starting Line Group (SLG), although never present at actual negotiating tables, is illustrative of the way in which tested practises from British and Dutch contexts could be marshalled and mobilised to influence "the content of legislation because they had been fed into the Commission policy development process".

This in Britain was, however, only a partial ‘catching-up’ with the existing anti-discrimination provisions in relation to race and gender. While religious discrimination was extended to cover the provision of goods and services in 2007, there was no duty upon the public sector to take proactive steps to promote religious equality as was created in respect of racial equality by the Race Relations Act (Amendment) Act 2000 and as also existed in relation to gender and disability, till the Equalities Act (2010). After considerable lobbying the government extended the public duty to include religion and belief and this was eventually included in this legislation that the recent Equalities and Human Rights Commission has been created to monitor.

As yet there is no prospect of religious equality catching up with the importance that employers and other organizations give to sex or race. A potentially significant victory, however, was made when the government agreed to include a religion question in the 2001 Census. This was the first time this question had been included since the inception of the Census in 1851 and was largely unpopular outside the politically active religionists, among whom Muslims were foremost. Nevertheless, it has the potential to pave the way for widespread ‘religious monitoring’ in the way that the inclusion of an ethnic question in 1991 had led to the more routine use of ‘ethnic monitoring’.

In sum, then, while original legal approach to anti-discrimination in Britain was the statutory tort of unlawful discrimination (created by the SDA 1975 and RRA 1976), subsequent developments, especially through European developments, have meant that this ‘public function’ of discrimination law has become more explicit (Malik 2007). Moreover, UK discrimination law has come to accommodate some of the provisions of the ECHR through the Human Rights Act (1998).

These developments have led to what is sometimes described as the ‘constitutionalising’ of discrimination law. In other words the incorporation of the ECHR through the HRA has proven to be catalyst in shaping recent changes to anti-discrimination measures. This is perhaps most evident in the decision to name the commission entrusted with the task of monitoring the implementation and practice of all previous anti-discrimination legislation, as well as the two most recent EC Directives, as an Equality and Human Rights Commission and the move to recognize ‘intersectionality’ as a legitimate ‘ground’ in itself (Meer 2010b). Most significantly, the new legislative developments have, on the one hand, created a duty of multi-faceted equality in the public sector, and on the other hand, included religion. Whilst the latter involved the utilisation of an EU directive, it has gone much further than the EU required. Hence, in less than a decade, mainly under pressure from a Muslim lobby, the UK government has moved from denying the existence of religious discrimination to the strongest legislation on the offence in Europe.

#### ***d. Issues and Practices of Cultural Difference: ‘Mixing’***

Theoretical and political perspectives on multicultural and ethno-religious diversity need to take account of the complexities and ambiguities that characterize most social phenomena. Where the former parts of the report have offered an events-based account of Black-Caribbean and Asian post-immigration communities, this part highlights social practices of ‘mixing’.

Phenomena of ‘mixed race’ have been a hotspot for the racist imagination (Bauman 1990). British history gives ample evidence for how such phenomena are perceived as challenges to

racially constituted boundaries and, as such, trigger rejection and aggression.<sup>12</sup> The extent to which (British) racism had defined itself in relation to the dangers of ‘miscegenation’ and ‘race crossing’ makes it all the more noteworthy how recent positions and debates appear to have moved. Inter-ethnic partnerships or the presence of ‘mixed race’ children as such are not particularly noteworthy and certainly do not provoke the level of resentment or paternalistic anxiety that marked the response of majority society just a few decades ago (Wilson 1987; Tizard and Phoenix 1993). Notions of racial purity are confined to the racist fringes, where, for example, the British National Party (BNP) offers a type of New Right ideology that rejects ‘mixing’ in order to “preserve the rich tapestry of mankind” (BNP n.d.).

In contrast, it is much more common for policy-makers to celebrate the cultural diversity represented by the fact of inter-ethnic partnering and the presence of ‘mixed race’ children. Positive reference to Britain as a ‘mongrel nation’ mirrors the way in which some of the negative characterizations of the past have been embraced in everyday rhetoric (Christian 2000). Trevor Phillips, head of the EHRC, recently suggested that the increasing number of inter-ethnic partnerships and ‘mixed heritage’ children represented a fundamental and positive transformation: “make way for the British Obama generation” (Phillips 2009).<sup>13</sup>

Clearly, the positive discourse of racial diversity does not capture the various ways in which a problem perspective on ‘mixing’ persists, often wrapped in paternalistic talk of ‘identity crises’, and in which ‘mixed race’ individuals experience disadvantage.<sup>14</sup> In fact, socio-economic marginalization continues to characterize the experience of significant parts of ‘mixed race’ groups. Moreover, racist violence towards ‘miscegenation’ still occurs,<sup>15</sup> and parents of mixed-race children continue to encounter difficulties. A recent study by Harman (2010) points to difficulties for mothers of mixed-heritage children in their own families (mirrored in the overrepresentation of children of ‘mixed’ background on child protection registers, see Owen and Statham 2009). Tikly, Caballero et al. (2004) highlight how bullying that centres on the dual heritage of children is relatively widespread in schools and how curricula, schools’ policies and teachers’ practices are not always adequate to cater for the needs of ‘mixed race’ children. This all points to the caveat that the policy discourse of celebrating ‘mixing’ may not capture the variety of experiences of people from ‘mixed’ backgrounds.

There is evidence of this variety in particular across ethnic and class backgrounds. White/black Caribbean children experience similar measures of socio-economic disadvantage as their black Caribbean peers (Song 2010). As regards educational attainment there are differential rates for white/black Caribbean, white/black African, white/Asian compared to the white average. Whilst the achievements of the first group are, on average, lower, the second obtains similar grades to their white peers and the third, on average, performs better. The recent report of the National Equality Panel (NEP 2010, 76-8) confirms this picture but also highlights, among other factors (not least: gender), the role of religion as a statistical variable in educational attainment (Burgess, Greaves and Wilson 2009) and employment disadvantage

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12 ‘Miscegenation’ played a significant role in triggering wide-spread riots in British port cities in 1919 as well as in the Notting Hill riots of 1959 (see Fn. 8).

13 Phillips responded to a report commissioned by the EHRC that highlighted, in particular, increasing numbers of inter-ethnic relationships (Platt 2009).

14 The 2008/9 British Crime Survey points out that the risk for adults with a mixed background to become victim of a crime is, at 35%, significantly higher than for those with an Asian (26%) or white (23%) background.

15 Among them in 2005 the murder of a Liverpool teenager, Anthony Walker, who had been seen to be holding hands with his white girlfriend.

(Khattab 2009).

Generally, religion also appears as one factor that complicates the story of uniformly increasing rates of inter-ethnic relationship. For some groups, such as Muslims of Pakistani background but also Indian Sikhs, co-religionist preferences coincides with relatively high rates of religious affiliation (Platt 2009). The different significance attached to marriage is another feature that accounts for varying rates of inter-ethnic partnering across ethno-religious groups (Berthoud 2005). Accordingly, whilst inter-ethnic partnering has become wide-spread among Black-Caribbeans, patterns for other groups point much more towards preservation and homogamy, with less than 10 percent of inter-ethnic partnerships for men and women of Bangladeshi or Pakistani descent (Platt 2009, 42-3). There is thus no uniform movement towards ‘mixing’ and, in particular, the interactions between race, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status are important but also difficult to account for and to disaggregate for their role in explaining such trends.

In line with such complexities, it is also difficult to draw more than loose connections between the occurrence and visibility of ‘mixing’ and the prevalence of racist stereotypes. Clearly, however, one significant insight has to be that ‘mixed race’ children face less discrimination than only a few decades ago and that inter-ethnic partnering has been gradually normalized. The British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) that collected data on attitudes towards ethnic minority spouses and ethnic minority bosses shows a striking trend of generational change (Ford 2008, 612-2). The rates of change and the relatively uneven participation of British post-immigration communities in the process of ‘mixing’ and partnering are, one may suggest, a footnote to attitudinal changes that, over the last decades, comprise all ethnic minority groups, though to varying degrees (Muttarak and Heath 2010).

Do the increasing prevalence of and the changing attitudes towards ethnic mixing then present themselves as an example of the types of “intermixture that appear to have evolved spontaneously and organically from ... the ordinary multicultural of the postcolonial metropolis” (Gilroy 2004, 136)? It is no doubt problematic to cite complex social phenomena, such as the various dimensions and meanings of ‘mixing’, in support of rather abstract theories. It seems, however, that the gradual normalization of ethnic mixing in Britain is indeed connected to encounters that took place outside of the purview of official multicultural politics. The relationship between ‘mixing’, conceived as ‘transgressive’ and as a challenge to understandings of homogeneous nationhood, and the decline of previously pervasive categories of colour racism is difficult to trace and substantiate. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that members of majority society that are inducted into cultural framework that is thoroughly multicultural in advertisement, music and the arts develop dispositions that attribute less significance to racial boundaries.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4. Definitions of respect and recognition in Great Britain**

With regard to claims advanced by post-immigration groups, we have pointed out some of the dissimilarities. Diverse experiences and social locations underpin particular concerns, responses to different experiences of stigmatization and different ideals of equality and

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<sup>16</sup> Which would be a simple application of Gordon Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis. Ethnographic research, however, points to more complex processes that are highly variable according to where inter-ethnic contact occurs and how it is mediated. This is, for example, what Coretta Phillips (2008) points to in a study of inter-ethnic relations in British young offenders institutions or Anoop Nayak (2003) in a study of ethnicity and inter-ethnic contact in British youth subcultures.

respect. Beyond the practical specificity of this variation, we suggest that there are two broad versions of claims and that accommodation may take two basic forms, equal dignity and equal respect (Taylor 1994; Modood 2007).

Equal dignity requires the abolition of discriminatory laws and the incorporation of individuals *despite their differences* into a horizon of universal rights. Equal respect by contrast suggests that identity markers are considered for the value they represent to their bearers and that *because of such differences* law and policy need to respond differentially to the nature of the difference at stake. Where equal dignity has not been achieved, this is more often than not a question of the inadequate application of principles of equality and non-discrimination. This, however, is not the case with some of the most contested demands for equal respect that are advanced in contemporary Britain. Here political debates often showcase fundamental disagreement over the respect and recognition that is due to ethno-religious communities in the public sphere.

Recent debates on cultural difference in Britain have tended to pit the two varieties of claims and the ‘two kinds of difference’ against each other in a binary manner. Various theorists have over the last two decades contrasted *multiculturalism* with *multiculture*, suggesting their practical irreconcilability and a necessary antagonism (e.g., Waldron 1996; Gilroy 2000). While to us such binary oppositions appear unnecessary (Modood and Dobbernack 2010), we need to recognize that a regime that unites equal dignity with equal respect requires considerable fine-tuning and will inevitably raise conflicts and misunderstandings.

Britain is undoubtedly a forerunner with regard to the two domains. There has been a quicker recognition than, say, in Germany that post-immigration groups were here to stay; a greater readiness than in France to make symbolic representations of the nation and the national story hospitable to difference; and a greater concern with equality and greater respect for differences than what has been achieved in comparable immigration countries. The following thematizes the achievements of the British case in relation to the horizon of public values that are present and discernible in British discourses on difference, as an institutional arrangement and in social practices. Such achievements, it may be worth restating, are neither unambiguous, nor irreversible. They should be seen as potentials that depend for their achievement on continued political effort, such as the pressure from minority groups and political actors’ willpower.

#### *Values of the British regime of accommodation*

Roy Jenkins, we have noted in the beginning of the report, conceived of integration ‘not as a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ (Jenkins 1967, 267). A value horizon of what accommodation, ideally, should be about was thus formulated early on: it includes equality in a situation where partaking in the benefits of equal political and social citizenship would not require immigrants or their descendents to abandon cultural or religious attributes. We have suggested that this idea remains a powerful principle that despite problems in its implementation constitutes an ideal of British multicultural acceptance.

The accommodation of difference by means of equal respect, what Jenkins pointed to as the legitimacy of “cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance”, has not been uncontested. It had to go against the idea of homogeneous white, protestant nationhood that Linda Colley (1992) points to as the past ferment of Britishness. In fact, as official discourse is ready to ‘celebrate diversity’, homogeneity continues to exert a pull such as when the space for religious difference is disputed or when economic crises reanimate racialized self-



conceptions. The Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB 2000) highlighted how ‘rethinking the national story’, as the commission put it, was a necessity to open a space for post-immigration groups to find a place. This attempt to rethink Britain is not without ambiguities and continues to be marred by uncertainties as illustrated by Gordon Brown’s recent attempt to formulate a more tangible notion of Britishness (Brown 2005).

### *Policies and institutional arrangements*

We have pointed to the successive consolidation and institutionalization of racial equality since the 1970s. It is arguably not merely a desire for standards of racial equity that underpinned this development. The agenda was partially driven, on the centre-left, by the guilty conscience of policy-makers wanting to compensate for increasingly restrictive immigration rules and, on the right, by the desire to countervail racist unrest.

In its early days as well as in its more contemporary development, the broadening of the equality agenda is characterized by successive ‘discoveries’ of problems of inequality, invariably in response to minority mobilization. The ‘colour bar’, the openly racist discrimination in the labour market, including the public sector, and open racism in housing and social services, were first ‘discovered’ as a scandal in the 1960s and early 1970 and the first Race Relations Acts were thus intended to put an end to openly racist discrimination.

The insufficiencies of these first responses and the continued presence of an underbelly of racism were again revealed and thematized such as in the uprisings in Brixton and elsewhere. A more engaged response to the persistence of racism thus had to take account of more subtle stigmatizations of post-immigration groups, such as of the (more or less) coded representations of black criminality that Stuart Hall (1978) brought out.

The mobilization against ‘sus’ in the 1980s is thus in line with the scandalizing of the police response to the murder of Stephen Lawrence in the 1990s. Racism, in coded and institutionally entrenched forms, made public authorities adopt racist practices and prevent them from delivering an equal service to the members of post-immigration communities. The new legislative response to the Macpherson inquiry was not least welcomed as it engaged with the deeper structures of British racism that had previously been left undisturbed.

Equality in terms of the accommodation of religious beliefs and protection against discrimination on grounds of religion is, as mentioned above, another area where minority grievances – after long debates and in a process of tough lobbying – have been heard and codified such as, most recently, in the Equality Act 2010. Opening a place in British education for non-Christian faith schools or allowing for Muslim curriculum objectives are further challenges that continue to be politically contentious (Meer 2007).

As regards the political process, the adoption of equality measures rarely proceeded without pressure from below. Minority agency in various forms, through public protests, advocacy groups or party-political channels, played an indispensable role. The most recent elections showed for example that the British Muslim electorate, though politically heterogeneous and difficult to mobilize *en bloc*, was considered a force to be reckoned with and candidates from all three major parties went to lengths to vow Muslim constituents (Chapman and Versi 2010).

*Acceptance and accommodation as social practice.*

There is hardly an unambiguously discernible picture of the values that are embodied in the relations between British minorities and majority groups on a variety of social levels. While this report has pointed to differences among post-immigration groups, 'majority' is an equally unwieldy denominator that potentially conceals the diversity of interactions between minorities and different strata of majority society. With regard to 'racial mixing' we have suggested that this differentiation is highly significant. Differential everyday experiences of diversity need to be considered as well as the way in which various socio-economic groups may have different experience of the post-immigration groups and individuals they encounter.

In a different matter, the problematisation of 'mixing', with its long-standing history in the theme of miscegenation, has not been displaced but at least amended by the official theme of celebrated diversity. British diversity is in fact often presented as an 'asset', as was particularly discernible in the early years of the Labour government of the late 1990s or in the more recent run-up to the London Olympics 2012. Cultural diversity as an asset is however at least partially counterbalanced by the rhetoric on immigration that tends to present outsiders as a threat to British economic well-being. The previous Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who was not above giving voice to such resentments – 'British jobs for British workers' (cited in Summers 2009) –, experienced a backlash just before the May 2010 election when his remarks on the 'bigotry' of a staunch Labour supporter were accidentally recorded and subsequently made public. While immigration and asylum thus continue to be noxious political issues, such debates do not necessarily tarnish the more wide-spread appreciation of the fact of cultural diversity in Britain (MORI 2005; 2009).

Conceivably, the increasing acceptability of cultural racism and in particular of Islamophobic resentment may tarnish this picture, even though the significance of 'culture versus colour' in British racism is contested. Robert Ford (2008) uses the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey to advance a broader claim on the relative insignificance of cultural attributes. Other data, not least in the most recent BSA survey of 2010 (Voas and Ling 2010), appears to challenge his account (which still works with the unwieldy and imprecise category of 'Asians') in particular in relation to Muslims.

There is thus considerable evidence of how everyday interaction across ethnic and cultural lines is more common and less remarkable than it used to be, say, two decades ago. There are practices of conviviality that are certainly difficult to capture with a view to how majorities tolerate minority practices. Rather we need to take notice of how in such processes of everyday exchange, as suggested by Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, culturally hybrid forms emerge and spread. The claims for respect and recognition that British Muslims put forward, too, are not predominantly about tolerance but for the public recognition and accommodation of religious belief.

## **5. Conclusion**

Summary analyses of the British response to post-immigration difference run into difficulties. In fact, on the basis of the above we can suggest that contravening tendencies are at play and that progress in one domain may well coincide with regressive trends in another. Moreover, achievements, such as in response to the Macpherson Inquiry, are not irreversible (Younge 2009). An increasingly entrenched animosity against Islam mobilizes not only fringe groups but animates significant numbers within majority society (Bleich 2009). At the same time, the Equality Act 2010 points to the readiness to engage with the claims and positions of minority

groups and to further develop the British agenda of multicultural accommodation.

Various scenarios are thus conceivable. The approach that was taken in relation to other types of differences could be carried forward and extended to ethno-religious groups; however, a second and equally conceivable path may involve a break from the better traditions of British multiculturalism and the rejection of identities and claims of British Muslims and other ethno-religious groups as impossible to accommodate. While there is the potential to 'rethink the national story' and to establish a kind of multicultural citizenship that has equality and respect written into it, there is equally the potential for regression even going back and beyond the norms of a more minimalist *modus vivendi* towards ethno-national parochialism.

As was the case with the relative waning of colour racism, historical analysis suggests that prejudice, even when it is deeply entrenched, is not beyond change. Such change may be driven by the liberalization of new generations' attitudes. It may also be prompted by new visibilities of cultural or religious groups and an appreciation of their place in the broader cultural, social and political context of the nation, its narratives and representations. While some of the examples highlighted in this report offer considerable hope, the contemporary situation is aggravated by the amalgamation of global anxieties with local concerns. National debates continue to be at risk of being taken hostage by the 'clash of civilization' thesis and security concerns continue to be unhelpfully combined with questions of cultural pluralism (Huntington 1992; Prins and Salisbury 2008).

British cultural pluralism has been positively captured by two different approaches. Multiculturalism, as concerned with the place and claims of ethno-religious groups, and multiculturalism, accounting for life, social practices and cultural production in urban diasporas, fit loosely and imperfectly to the experiences of South Asian and Black Caribbean post-immigration groups. Multiculturalism envisages the re-modelling of majority society's standards of acceptance in a way that inscribes aspects of minority identity into majority culture. Multiculturalism is concerned with the reappraisal of difference as a positive fact instead of an unwelcome aberration. Its concern is with equal respect and with the need for Britain to adapt its regimes of citizenship, policies and laws to recognize cultural pluralism. In particular the focus is on making Britain hospitable to the practices and claims of ethno-religious groups. Multiculturalism, by contrast, is concerned with fashioning a form of equality that affords minority groups a place in the cultural representations of the nation. One of its achievements, we have suggested, was the abolition of the stigma that was historically directed at 'mixed race' individuals not merely for their imagined inferiority or 'problematic' identities but for how they constituted a challenge to classificatory regimes of national belonging.

The demands of both for public accommodation are discernible in the various claims and grievances of post-immigration groups. On the whole, British policy-making has been responsive to such claims and law and policies have been adapted to make space for various post-immigration differences, though this has been not without contradictions and countervailing tendencies. This report then suggests that there is the potential in Britain to further forms of respect, equality and multicultural recognition.

What this report could not fully investigate is a further area of critical questions regarding toleration and respect. These are not merely thrown up in the relationship of minority and majority groups. They extend further to how different forms of difference can be brought together, coexist and acknowledge each others' legitimacy. For Britain, this is the challenge facing multiculturalism and multiculturalism, as the two paradigms that have frequently put in opposition, rather than allowing for a meaningful relationship and a 'conversation across differences' (Modood and Dobbernack 2010). Too often this conversation is barred as the

modalities of one are imposed on the other. Among contemporary cultural diversity challenges in Britain thus numbers the challenge to recognize that the reality of post-immigration groups requires a pluralized normative and conceptual vocabulary that makes space for coexistence and respect between two ‘kinds’ of difference.

### **III. Challenges in Education: Muslim Guidance and Abolition 200**

#### **1. Introduction**

English education includes some 8.1 million pupils. 4.1 million attend state-funded primary schools, 3.3 million secondary schools, and 576,200 independent schools (Department for Education 2011). Across Britain, participation in primary and secondary education is compulsory from the ages of 5 to 16.<sup>17</sup> There is some variety of school types, which is partly to do with historical precedents: universal education was introduced in 1870, notably by introducing or extending state funding of denominational schools. While some Church of England schools were turned into secular ‘community schools’, there remains space within the state system for schools with a religious ethos, so-called voluntary-controlled and voluntary-aided schools.<sup>18</sup> Independent schools, also called ‘public schools’, account for roughly 7% of British pupils. These are privately run schools that charge fees, may have a religious ethos and are generally seen to be, though not all of them in practice are, providers of elite education. Public school pupils are highly represented among the student population of various prestigious higher education institutions, such as Oxford or Cambridge.

Elitism in British education runs deep, and while there are signs of increasing social mobility over time, various groups remain disadvantaged. Among British pupils in primary education, 26.5 per cent are of minority ethnic background; in secondary education, the figure is 22.4 per cent (Department for Education 2011).<sup>19</sup> In line with the social position of their parents, post-immigration children experience higher degrees of poverty and deprivation and generally lower degrees of educational attainment (DfES 2006, 38-70). The level of relative poverty among post-immigration groups is measured by their eligibility for free school meals (see Appendix Figure 1). While, in 2004, roughly 14% of overall pupils in English schools were eligible, the figure for Black Caribbeans is 34.7% in primary and 26.7% in secondary education – for Pakistanis 31.3% and 35.9% and for Bangladeshis 42.4% and 53.2%.

It is not just ethnic minority pupils, but poorer pupils generally that are under-represented at elite institutions and generally show lower rates of achievement. Underachievement correlates with the major measurement of socio-economic disadvantage, eligibility for free school meals (FSM). Ethnic minority pupils – except for Indians and Chinese – are statistically more likely to be eligible for free school meals. While those eligible are less likely to obtain high marks or to be admitted to elite institutions of Higher Education, this disadvantage is experienced less by most minority groups. Whatever the causal links that tie ethnicity to socio-economic disadvantage, and both to educational attainment, statistics show that, except for Caribbean

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<sup>17</sup> This is to be raised to 18 by 2013. In 2006, 83% of 16-year olds and 70% of 17-year olds were in post-compulsory education (Department for Education 2008).

<sup>18</sup> The difference between the two is to do with issues of funding and the degree of involvement of non-state, usually religious organisation in the management of the school. There are 2,500 voluntary-controlled and 2,100 voluntary-aided Church of England schools within the state system. With Academies and Free Schools there are two new school types that are partly or wholly state funded but not controlled by Local Educational Authorities (LEAs), which control the majority of schools.

<sup>19</sup> The categorisation of ethnic minorities in Britain is not straightforward. While public authorities often refer to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, others also count white but non-British minorities, for example Irish or recent A8 immigrants (see Figure 1). The ethnic minorities that we consider in this report are African or African-Caribbean and South Asian post-immigration groups, See the British WPI report for ACCEPT Pluralism for background information and additional data (Modood, Dobbernack and Meer 2011).

pupils, ethnic minority pupils have higher levels of attainment than their social class peers (Dustmann, Machin and Schönberg 2010). Nevertheless, given the low levels of qualifications some groups started with, there is a problem of persistent inequality. Overall, however, there has been a significant upward trajectory for many post-immigration groups and British schools have played a role in this experience.

Persistent inequality, then, has multiple dimensions and affects different groups in different ways. The picture for post-immigration groups is varied as shown in the recent National Equality Panel Report (NEP 2010, 264-5). Generally, children of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean 'mixed heritage', perform worse than the national average. Other 'mixed' groups or children of Indian or Chinese background, by contrast, exceed this average. Religious affiliation, statistically of considerable importance, correlates for Christian, Jewish and Hindu pupils with higher rates of achievement, while Muslim pupils perform worse, in particular if they are male (Burgess, Greaves and Wilson 2009). Although some groups suffer considerable disadvantage, others groups outperform their majority peers. Hence, there is no uniform picture of ethnic disadvantage in British education. The patterns of generational upward mobility across different post-immigration groups are varied, too, and a complex mix of cultural, social, economic and spatial factors seems to account for variations between the educational attainment of these groups (Modood 2011a). The two groups whose place in British education we discuss in the following two cases – African Caribbean pupils and Muslim pupils of South Asian heritage – are generally doing less well than other post-immigration groups or than their ethnic majority peers. When accommodation, tolerance and respect are debated for Muslims and African Caribbean pupils, such issues are usually linked to concerns about educational attainment and upward social mobility within these groups.

The uneven distribution of ethnic minority pupils across Britain means that while there are parts of the country with low numbers of ethnic minority pupils, other parts, for example London or conurbations in the East Midlands or Yorkshire, have high concentrations of ethnic minorities. Inner and outer London account for close to 45% of the ethnic minority population at British schools (DfES 2006, 28). Schools in these parts of the country may have large majorities of post-immigration groups in their student bodies (Burgess, Wilson and Lupton 2005).

Such concentrations of post-immigration populations have in recent years been problematized as the results of 'ethnic self-segregation' (eg., Cantle 2001, para 5.8.1.). This analysis, however, has been challenged, among other things for its reliance on the problematic assumption that British post-immigration groups are generally averse to mixing (Finney and Simpson 2009, 45-56; Husband and Alam 2011). It seems clear that ethnic minority groups in Britain frequently want to live in diverse and not in mono-cultural surroundings, and that self-segregation is a flawed diagnosis if it ignores the complex factors accounting for choice of residence and neighbourhood mix, 'white flight' among them. While schools in some parts of the country show trends towards higher rates of segregation that may be difficult to reverse, others do not and indeed point in the opposite direction (Burgess and Worth 2011). Segregation, although it is often referred to in debates about educational priorities and policy measures, is a contested diagnosis and refers to a complex social situation.

*Ethnic Minority Pupils in Bristol:* While much of scholarly interest and political concern has been focused on areas of high concentration of BME pupils, post-immigration groups are dispersed across the country and often represented in smaller numbers, such as the English South West where only 3.3% of the country's ethnic minority pupils are educated. Bristol, the

main city in the South West, has a long-standing presence of African and African Caribbean post-immigration groups and some of its neighbourhoods, such as St. Paul's, have gained national recognition such as for its yearly Carnival—as well as for one of the first occurrences of unrest in the 1980s. The ethnic minority population in Bristol numbers 8.2% (according to the 2001 Census), more recently estimated to have increased to roughly 12% – more than 45,000 people. In 2008, 22.5% of pupils were estimated to be of ethnic minority background. In recent years it was in particular the arrival of Somalis that has changed the composition of some Black communities. While in the early 1990s their presence was marginal, with 1,749 pupils and 3.8% of the school population Somalis now constitute the single largest minority group in Bristol (Bristol City Council 2009). In a recent statement, Bristol City Council (2010, 8) noted “evidence of tension within some Bristol's schools around the intolerance of diverse family life, perceived unfairness of housing allocation, inter-racial tension, a rise in gang activity, ‘Islamophobia’ and anti-Somali feelings, and an increase in homophobic and disablist hate crime.” For a more detailed overview of the cultural diversity challenges in British schools see the report of the Institute for Community Cohesion (iCoCo 2009).

The mixed picture of attainment and upward mobility in education has not necessarily been recognized in more general accounts of the social position of ethnic minority groups. Moreover, underachievement has often been conceived as the result of pathological culture, in particular where Black youths were perceived as culturally insecure and as ‘problem children’. Following this characterization, schools were seen as having to adopt benign interventions to rescue Black children from their allegedly disorderly surroundings. Against this, anti-racist education proposed to consider Black educational underachievement as a construction that needed to be challenged (Troyna 1984). An anti-racist programme would positively engage with those, deconstruct stereotypes and instil the kind of self-confidence that would make them succeed.

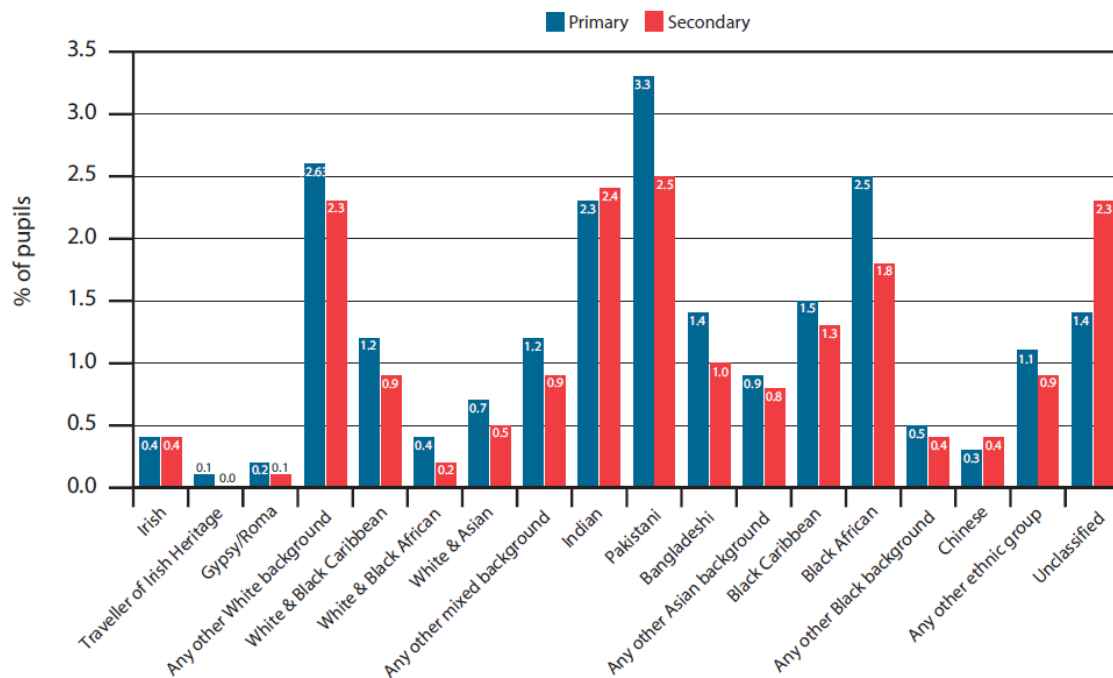
*Table 1: Ethnic minority population in the UK, the South West of England and Bristol (Census 2001)*

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>National Average</b>	<b>South West</b>	<b>Bristol</b>
<b>White</b>	90.92	97.71	91.83
<b>Mixed</b>	1.31	0.76	2.08
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	4.57	0.67	2.85
<b>Black or Black British</b>	2.30	0.43	2.32
<b>Chinese and Other ethnic group</b>	0.99	0.45	0.90

Not only for Black pupils have self-confidence and a measure of cultural certainty been

identified as preconditions for educational success. The underachievement of Muslim pupils has also been connected to negative representations of their religious heritage as well as to the perceived permissiveness of the British educational environment that fails to provide for moral signposts. An Islamic ethos, by contrast, is seen to provide for these and to lead to higher standards of behaviour. Arguably, many Muslim parents find the idea of Islamic education appealing not exclusively for its religious focus but for how an educational environment that reflects these values provides for positive behaviour and leads to higher educational attainment. Hence, the following examines in both cases how cultural self-confidence is seen to impact on educational success and how this issue informs arguments about accommodation of and respect for Black and Muslim identities at state schools.

Figure 1: The ethnic minority composition of Primary and Secondary school pupils (DfES 2006, 8)



Anti-racist and multicultural priorities in education stand for two distinct, though not necessarily oppositional, impulses. The former takes on stereotypes: it challenges racism in the mainstream and its institutions with the aim of deconstructing, unsettling and ideally remaking the mainstream in a way that inscribes minority features into it. The latter is interested in the creation of spaces that allow for ethno-religious difference to be articulated, practiced without penalties and diversity to be an acknowledge part of an evolving, composite unity. While both orientations may often coincide in practice, we suggest that they can be distinguished for their accounts of accommodation. The *reconsideration of local and national narratives* and the *accommodation of religious claims* that we respectively explore in the following two cases thus correspond to two ways in which cultural diversity may be seen to pose a challenge. Those two ways stand for two domains of legitimate claims for accommodation and we need to distinguish meaning and scope of acceptance accordingly.<sup>20</sup> What acceptance means when it is put forward in claims for accommodation, depends on the issues at stake and the contexts of claims-making. This report examines two such contexts where representatives of different organisations challenged each other, and where the scope of

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed statement of those two domains and “two modes of difference” see Modood and Dobbernack (2010)



acceptance and respect, were debated in the field of education.

In 2007, the City of Bristol organized a number of official events and supported community initiatives to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Already preceding the bicentenary, representations of the local and national past became the focus of heated debates. We explore the problematic commemoration of slavery in a city that is marked by public memorials to its slave-trading Merchant Venturers. The question of how slavery should be commemorated, and more generally how 'Black History' should be taught and inform curricular priorities, are of interest and we discuss what acceptance may be seen to mean in how the British national – and the Bristolian local – story have been contested.

Also in 2007, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) issued guidance notes, 'Towards greater understanding', that were intended to provide for a collection of various best practice examples of how schools should meet the demands for religious accommodation from Muslim pupils and their parents. The guidance notes caused considerable controversy and invited objection from various quarters, such as by British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD). We study this controversy with an interest in how acceptance is defined in the debate about religion in state schools.

#### *Date and methods*

This report draws on desk research and fieldwork. We have collected statistical data, policy documents, statements and brochures issued by local authorities, non-governmental organisations and schools and examined the relevant scholarly literature. We have selected our two cases studies to circumscribe debates in two relevant fields of contestation about the accommodation of ethnic minority groups in British education. However, we acknowledge that the concern with Muslim and African Caribbean groups and their claims might be seen to entail a certain bias: it involves the concern with groups whose presence, accommodation and educational attainment have been considered problematic for some time (and not with ethnic minority groups of lesser visibility in public debate). It also means that we are considering groups that have an established presence in Britain for many decades, and not more recent arrivals, such as A8 immigrants or Somalis. Nonetheless, we believe that the choice of groups and cases represents an exemplary snapshot of how difficult instances of cultural diversity are negotiated in contemporary Britain.

Fieldwork has been conducted in between March and June 2011 largely in the Bristol area, with additional interviews in London and Birmingham. We have conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with experts, including three teachers, four employees of Bristol City Council, one Police Constable, five members of non-governmental and voluntary sector organisations, and one academic educationalist. Among these informants seven were male and seven female. A discussion group was held on 7 July 2011 to present initial findings and obtain feedback. Informants for interviews and the discussion group (see the Appendix for a list) have in most cases been involved in the relevant debates, and we have approached them in the knowledge that they would have considerable expertise and potentially strong opinions. In both cases, we have tried to select respondents with different perspectives: in the first case, representatives of the official Council positions, as well as members of the voluntary sector outside of the Council; in the second, we have selected people from different organisations, MCB and BMSD, and with different perspectives on how to accommodate religious pupils in state schools.

We have paid some attention to one local school, City Academy, where we have interviewed

and (as part of the discussion group) spoken to four current members of staff and its former Head of History. The City Academy is located in the Easton area of Bristol, one of the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of the city that also shows high levels of deprivation. City Academy to some extent showcases problems and potentials: its student population is diverse, with significant numbers of Muslim and African Caribbean students as well as a significant number of new immigrants from Somalia. At this school, the religious needs of Muslim pupils as well as the shape of historical narratives and how these acknowledge the legacy of slavery and the place of Black pupils are both issues of considerable importance.

Interviews were conducted in schools, public places such as cafés, the workplace or the home of the respondent. Most respondents were eager to contribute and there was no occasion where difficult situations proved challenging for the interviewer. All interviews were taped and transcribed. We have offered complete confidentiality to all our informants, though in no case did respondents – mostly people of some public profile – insist on this. However, we felt it unnecessary to indicate names in the majority of cases, with the exception of three expert respondents in the second case on religious guidance. The interview guide as well as a list of interviewees can be found in the appendix of the report.

We have generally been concerned to faithfully report positions and to point to interesting or exemplary strategies of argumentation. Where appropriate we have also been concerned to examine rhetoric and the discursive *topoi*, in particular in the second case on religious guidance where nuances of tone and argumentation were particularly important to consider.

## 2. The commemoration of ‘Abolition 200’

Where its current pluralism coincides with traditional understandings of national history and its historic mission, Britain’s imperial and colonial past throws up challenges. Among them is the concern with how the ‘national story’, the representations that inform a national self-understanding, may be made to acknowledge injustices and the place of non-white people. The beginnings of this concern date to the 1970s when, in line with what Stuart Hall (2000) considers Britain’s ‘multicultural drift’, new attitudes and more pluralistic understandings of history and nation began to emerge. However, as in other post-colonial countries there has been considerable reluctance, if not resistance, to consider those aspects of history that contradict the image of Britain as a benign ruler, bringing progress to less fortunate parts of the world.<sup>21</sup>

Education is an important site for the debate of historical representations, given that the role of history at school is usually seen to be that it provides an authoritative account of the past and to reflect an acceptable mode for citizens to relate to it. Recent initiatives to change the history curriculum have been introduced as a matter of urgency as they are seen to address distortions: its alleged failure to provide for clear-cut historical narratives and the ‘long arc of time’ and its equally alleged emphasis on epochs and facts that do not relate to Britain’s positive achievements (Gove 2010; Ferguson 2011b). These suggestions, however, have also been met by considerable scepticism, for example for how they reflect a self-congratulatory revisionism (Evans 2011).

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<sup>21</sup> While such understandings have been challenged in the later 20th century, they have not disappeared. In fact, some see neo-colonial attitudes at work in current educational reform initiatives (Evans 2011). Members of the new government, notably Education Secretary Michael Gove, are accused of relying on the advice of scholars whose concern is a positive reconsideration of British colonialism (Ferguson 2011a).

While the British national story is an object of dispute, there often is a distinctly local flavour to such contestations. Regarding the place of African and African Caribbean citizens, the following considers a local episode – the debate about how to commemorate the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in Bristol – that points to issues of national significance.

A young respondent described the development of her historical interest in the context of these debates:

2007, it was like the big bang. It was like, ‘Oh my God, we’ve actually started talking about it’. And that kind of opened so many doors for people to say, ‘Right, you know what, there is inequalities in Bristol. Yes, let’s start looking at them. Slavery did happen, alright, we can identify where it happened, we can see that Bristol used to be a port for slaves, right, let’s, let’s investigate that a little bit more’. And that’s, that’s when the big bang really happened. Everyone just really started to say, ‘Right’, you know. And I think that’s even for me when the interest kind of grew, because before I wasn’t... in to history, I hated history, I was... that was like my worst subject, then throughout uni and then this big bang happening, it was just kind of like, ‘Oh my gosh, I need to be a part of it, I need to see what’s going on’.  
(Interview 8 March 2011)

Historical understandings may seem immutable, and the extent to which the legacy of colonial oppression and the presence of Black people in Bristol had been unacknowledged is an example. The rupture of such understandings, their expansion or the mere sense that history is ‘up for grabs’ may be experienced as a form of empowerment.

The following sketches out a brief picture of the Bristol context and then considers three areas of contestation that became particularly relevant in the area of education: the extent to which slavery should be an educational topic; how this priority relates to the endeavour to increase achievement among ethnic minority students; and how the National Curriculum should balance such concerns against other educational priorities.

### ***The Bristol context: intolerance, toleration, respect?***

In the early 18th century, Bristol was for some time one of the foremost centres of the transatlantic slave trade in Britain. As Bristol City Council (2008, 2) notes, “more than today’s population of Bristol” – more than 500,000 people – were transported across the Atlantic on ships registered in the city. Bristol’s Merchant Venturers, many of whom in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were trading in slaves or slave-produced commodities, accumulated considerable wealth that remains visible in the city to this day (Dresser 2001). Amelia Hill (2006) paints a vivid picture of the ubiquity of this memory in major urban landmarks. The history of the slave trade ‘resonates’

from Merchants Wharf to the Redcliffe Caves, where slaves are said to have been incarcerated, to Queen Square, the city’s most serene public space, completed at the height of Bristol’s involvement in the trade and where mayor Nathaniel Day petitioned against a tax on slaves. The pretty courtyard housing the Merchant Venturers’ Almshouse harks back to the powerful 18th-century pro-slavery lobby, while the bells of Bristol’s loveliest church, St Mary Redcliffe, were triumphantly set ringing when William Wilberforce’s Bill to abolish slavery was defeated in 1791.



*'Hate Slavery but love the Slave Traders'? Edward Colston, 1636-1721, entrepreneur and philanthropist, acquired his wealth through slave trade and labour.*

Today Bristol is ranked as leading charts on general happiness in the country, probably also for its considerable wealth and attractive historical cityscape.<sup>22</sup> As a matter of statistical fact, its black and minority ethnic populations neither participate in this wealth, nor show particular high levels of life satisfaction. Bristol has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the country, many of them with high levels of ethnic minority residents (Bristol City Council 2011, 4-5). When Bristol is portrayed as “a city of contrasts” (ibid.), these are not just the kinds of contrasts that cities today tend to refer to in order to showcase their cosmopolitan vibrancy. There are entrenched disparities of wealth and educational attainment, many of which run along ethnic lines.

While the lines connecting past injustice and the contemporary experience of disadvantage are less than straightforward, there is a sense that contemporary inequality is amplified and exacerbated by the official representations of a city whose historical wealth is bound up with slavery. This sense has been articulated for some time, in the run-up to Abolition 200, but already previously

in challenges to the ubiquity of Edward Colston, an 18th century philanthropist, politician and slave trader, in street names, schools and monuments. A 2006 campaign against the naming of a shopping district as ‘Merchants Quarter’ proved to be the launch pad for some of the contestations that we explore in the following. Among the achievements of this and other campaigns, a respondent suggested, was that they unsettled some of the certainties about Bristolian history: “they rattled Colston’s skeleton a little bit” (Interview, 4 April 2011).

The classification of claims for the revision of historical understandings, and of responses to such claims, is not straightforward. We have suggested that historical narratives, in as much as the exclusion of post-immigration groups is enshrined and naturalised, may be experienced as disempowering. In turn, the recognition of the presence of minority residents as a historical fact, as normal or even as something to be celebrated, points in the opposite direction and towards notions of respect.

- *Intolerance* is a possibility that is illustrated by vitriolic reactions to requests for acceptance and by the possibility of a majoritarian backlash against claims for national or local histories to be revised.
- *Toleration*, conventionally understood, is concerned with allowing the co-presence of others without revisiting initial objections. In our case, an approximation may be when minority residents are granted the educational spaces within or on the margins of the state system to perpetuate their ‘minority histories’ – but when these spaces remain largely separated from mainstream concerns and educational priorities.
- A challenge *beyond toleration* is how minority histories may be brought into and merged with majority representations. As regards Britain’s – or Bristol’s – African and African Caribbean citizens, the contention would be that, more than just a matter

<sup>22</sup> As measured by the ‘happiness’ of its workforce (Mental Health Foundation 2010) or its award for being Britain’s ‘most smiley city’.

of symbolism or of setting the historical record straight, the shape of the ‘national story’ has repercussions for how Britain (or Bristol) can aspire to be a place that is hospitable to the current and continued presence of Black post-immigration groups.

All three options are on the table and can be traced in positions that we examine in the following. The official impetus of Abolition 200 can be seen to go some way beyond toleration and towards the acknowledgment that majority and minority understandings of history belong together or should be fused. This is not to suggest that toleration is irrelevant or that – by virtue of more demanding positions being available – the United Kingdom is secure in its achievements. When claims for public recognition and equal respect are rejected, the fallback position may not be toleration but intolerance and an outright rejection of more minimal positions of forbearance. This could be characterised as the ‘enough already’ position: concessions that in the past were seen to have gone too far are said to require a muscular assertion of majority claims and – since the two are seen to be linked – the subjugation of minority perspectives.

Before offering some limited backgrounds on these kinds of claims in the Bristol context, we briefly outline three items that were particularly relevant in how the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave-trade became an issue in education and where particular understandings of acceptance or intolerance were developed.

- *Black identity*: The significance for African and African Caribbean schoolchildren to have a positive understanding of their African or Caribbean heritage is frequently underlined in educational discourse and in the debate about the legacy of slavery in Bristol. A more difficult issue seems to be the extent to which ‘Black History’ should be mainstreamed – should become ‘everybody’s history’ – as there is considerable resistance and frequently a sense of ‘it’s not for us’ in places where Black pupils are not or only marginally represented.
- *Achievement*: Both nationally and in Bristol the ‘underachievement’ of BME pupils is a significant concern. Where claims for public recognition or the reconstruction of historical narratives are concerned, there often appears to be some uncertainty about how these claims may heighten educational achievement. Critics suggest that the shape of historical narratives is irrelevant for this objective. The argument for how public recognition instils the kind of self-confidence that leads to heightened achievement is not always easy to make.
- *The national story*: If the point of history in the national curriculum is to give a contemporary expression of certain enduring values, to what extent is there – or should there be – space for a consideration of the experience of injustice and for minority perspectives. In the current national debate, the position that too much emphasis has been put on these is becoming increasingly popular.

Preceding the bicentenary and in subsequent debates, these issues became relevant. Before we examine in more detail the three kinds of contestations identified above and some positions and arguments within these fields, the following provides a brief sketch of this context of the debate.

### ***Abolition 200***

In an original statement that was put forward by the team in charge of planning for 2007, the emphasis was on the ‘commemoration’ of abolition and the ‘celebration of cultural diversity’

(Bristol City Council 2006). It was stated that the events “must be strongly led and informed by the experience and views of BME communities.” The statement proposed the objective of commemorating the bicentenary “in a contemporary and relevant way for the benefit of all of Bristol’s residents and businesses, and the Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) community in particular”. It connected this to objectives of urban development, the celebration of Bristol as a “vibrant, young and multi-cultural city, racial equality and equal opportunities.

This initial statement was met by resistance from the Consortium of Black Groups (COBG), a loose group of people coming from various sectors of Bristol’s Black community whose work paralleled the criticism directed at the national commemoration of the bicentenary (Ligali 2006; Ligali n.d.). In a ‘statement of non-compliance’ with the Council proposals, COBG (2006) objected to the City Council propositions and argued that

2007 should be a catalyst to invigorate and give focus to an agenda for change that improves the socio-economic and political position of Afrikan/Caribbean people in Bristol. ... The fight for freedom and our continued quest for social justice in the education system, housing, employment, health, and criminal justice systems, and arts, culture, and sports demonstrate that Black people’s situation has not changed to any great extent. We have simply swapped one form of slavery for another.

The idea that 1807 had seen the ‘end of slavery’, and that this end could be attributed to the actions of white abolitionists, caused offence. The celebrations, it was suggested, “will be nothing more than public relations exercises since the Council lacks both the political will and commitment to work with the BME community to progress the agenda for change” (COBG 2006). They were seen to be the result of a self-absorbed majoritarianism, somewhat ironically summarized as a celebration of “Wilberforce day” (Ligali 2006). The idea that the workings of a “eurocentric abolitionist movement” (COBG 2006) deserved this kind of “celebration” – whereas other perspectives and experiences continued to remain unacknowledged – caused offence, and Ligali (n.d.) concluded: “We dissociate ourselves from ‘slavery memorial’ events which assert African history begins and ends with slavery and the abolition of slavery by Europeans”.<sup>23</sup>

In the intervention from COBG, and in contributions by groups of a more national profile (Ligali 2006; Ligali n.d.), representations of the bicentenary were seen to reflect the continued subjugation of African people. For education, COBG pointed to the need to put more emphasis in the National Curriculum on the “history and legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade” and on the need for “schools in Bristol to teach about the local connections with and visible legacies of the slave trade” (COBG 2006). These visible legacies, it is suggested, are manifest in continued disadvantage and marginalisation. In Bristol these political commitments and historical representations were articulated in a situation where historical narratives had traditionally celebrated the commercial and slave-trading past. The dilemma for Bristol, then, seems to be the coincidence of different impulses and that one simply cannot “hate slavery but love the slave traders” (Bristol City Council 2008, 16).

### ***The Legacy Commission***

Some of the initial opposition to the official commemoration had been motivated by the concern that, as just another one-off event, the bicentenary would be little more than a public

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<sup>23</sup> One result of COBG’s advocacy was that Nelson Mandela cancelled a planned visit to Bristol (Sengupta 2007).

relations exercise. To alleviate such concerns, the Council showed some readiness to carry issues around Abolition 200 forward into a newly formed *Legacy Commission*. As with the bicentenary, there was little precedent for this and considerable puzzlement on the part of Council, as suggested by its Head of Cultural Services (Interview, 20 April 2011), on how to build institutions for this purpose.

The Legacy Commission, now in its fourth year, funds a variety of projects from within of for the benefit of Bristol's Black community. It supports community based initiatives in St. Paul's or Easton. In its most recent work programme for 2011/12 it supports a leadership programme and continues to fund projects in its three core areas, health, culture and education (BBC 2011). It is currently in a 'transition year' where it is explored how to transform the Commission into an external, community organisation that works in partnership with the Council.

The work of the Legacy Commission has not been undisputed. In 2009, Tory Councillor Richard Eddy (cited in Rkaina 2009) objected to its renewal and suggested that "Bristol ought to be tackling the problems of the present for the sake of all its citizens, rather than wallowing in self-indulgent hand-wringing over the past". Money spent on the Legacy Commission was wasted "subsidising politically-correct pet projects and funding jollies" and "over £1 million has been frittered away on this pointless spending spree". Similar expressions of disapproval were also evident in various letters to the editors of Bristol's *Evening Post*. One submitted that the "Legacy Commission is racist because it makes awards conditional on ethnicity." It further stated that the issues that the Commission was addressing fly "in the face of this country's noble stand to abolish global slavery and instead implies an obligation of continuing guilt on the part of white people to rectify any perceived inequality we might be accused of, based on race." In another letter, it was suggested that the Commission merely served "to raise tension and segregate communities. [...] It's racist ... imagine the shouts and threats if their [sic] was a 'White English' funding project or clubs that only accept white girls."

Besides objections about the efficiency of the Legacy Commission, the main criticism is about special treatment allegedly given to minorities. Councillor Eddy, without necessarily taking sides in the debate about how to understand history, seems to point to the insignificance of such issues for contemporary concerns. Not colour racism but the disproportional attention given to BME people, it was suggested, is what amounts to intolerance and racism. These objections stand in the context of a palpable retrenchment that became evident such as when a 2006 phone-in poll revealed a 90% majority against a civic apology for Bristol's involvement in 'the trade' (Hill 2006).

### ***Challenges in Education***

Objections to the commemoration of the bicentenary and the work of the Legacy Commission were put forward from two sides: from within the Black community, where there was considerable suspicion that the bicentenary would be an exercise in self-congratulation and inconsequence; and from within parts of the majority population where the argument that too much attention had been given to minority concerns appeared to have a considerable following. Accordingly, the Council found itself in a difficult position when it went about to develop initiatives, such as in the area of education.

In the guidelines for Bristol schools that were prepared by the Council's Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) (Bristol City Council 2007) ten 'must do actions' were listed, such as for schools to meet their statutory responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act to monitor BME attainment and to develop strategies to address underachievement. It was

also suggested strongly not to “present the Transatlantic Slave Trade in isolation” (Bristol City Council 2007, 9), and to make sure that “*all* young people understand the achievements that people of African descent have made to society and civilisation and that the focus is not just on the past few hundred years” (ibid, emphasis added). The report pointed to the need to present ‘Black role models’ and to review the curriculum so that not just their victimization but positive achievements of African people would be recognized. It was concerned to outline not just the required minimum but also – with its emphasis on mainstreaming the discussion of slavery and on a focus beyond the concern with passive suffering – in facilitating a more ambitious treatment of the past.

It is difficult to paint a coherent picture of how Bristol’s school system responded to more or less ambitious requests, how various institutions took up the recommendations made in the CYPS report, or accompanied the wider debate that began in the run-up to the bicentenary. In the following we discuss the three educational challenges that we have outlined before.

### ***Black identity***

When asked about whether the events and efforts of 2007 had a lasting effect on the historical awareness of Bristol’s schoolchildren, the Council’s Head of Cultural Services remarked:

if we’re positive about it, you could say that the schools in inner city Bristol who take this more seriously, are gonna have a better understanding of Black History, for a largely Black... increasing Black population in the school. I’d like to think it’s happened in some schools, not all. And even if it ... was happening in a progressive and systematic way, it’s certainly not happening in those schools which have majority populations, and that’s a national thing, not just Bristol. And so you’re gonna end up with a further division, aren’t you, in the community. You’ll get some young people who have a good or better understanding of Black History and others that have virtually none. (Interview, 12 April 2011)

This, then, seems to point to problems when the reconsideration of the ‘national story’ is something that happens only for or by minority pupils, and when majorities are virtually left undisturbed. There are some signs that this is the case and, moreover, that when slavery is taught and ‘Black History’ considered at majority white schools, of a kind of tokenism.

If the straightforward rejection of claims can be understood as a manifestation of intolerance, this latter position may be understood as the concession of tolerance that can be summarized as follows: if Black communities wish to concern themselves with the history of their presence in Britain and with the experience of injustice preceding the beginning of migration from the Caribbean after 1948, so be it. Where, however, institutional arrangements have to be made for the discussion of minority histories within the class-room, toleration may already not be the most adequate description. Clearly, however, the reconsideration of collective historical representations – the understanding that it’s not ‘Black History’ but ‘Our History’ – points to more demanding positions that arguably exceed the minimalism of the former position.

To be sure, there is a sense of positive purpose even in the kind of engagement with history or culture that more minimalist understandings, those that are not targeted at the representations of majority society, represent. Where predominant problematizations of Black boys, for example, are challenged with the celebration of a positive cultural image, this may support a sense of self-confidence even where its addressees are only Black youths. As the Vice-Chair of the Legacy Commission, pointed out, this benefit of having a positive understanding of



one's legacy is

about trying to steer young people from... crime... hurting each other and, you know, trying to live respectable lives without violence. You can't do that if you don't have any respect for yourself, you don't know who you are, where you come from. (Interview, 22 March 2011)

A member of the bicentenary implementation team further emphasized how a negative, self-destructive attitude in the African Caribbean community needed to be addressed. This 'demeanour' she considers to

be part of the legacy of the Slave Trade that demeanour of Black people and so if you continue to live your whole life like you don't belong, you don't fit, you have no contributions, you know, you got, you're always gonna be known from your ancestors about being enchained, and being whipped and that kind of thing. (Interview 18 March 2011)

Despite this significance an inwardly-oriented revision of historical understandings, this effort may be considered insufficient for how it, firstly, leaves majority attitudes and representations undisturbed and, secondly, remains concerned with the creation of positive cultural representations rather than with political change.

There is a strong feeling that *Black History* is problematically narrow when it remains *History for Black people*. A young respondent summarized the reaction that she experienced when she questioned the lack of interest that was evident in schools with low numbers of African or African Caribbean pupils:

I'm like, 'Ok, but do you not feel as though everyone needs to know how everyone contributed to everyone else?', 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no, because why would they wanna learn that, that's not their history'. (Interview, 8 March 2011).

Similarly, the former Head of History at Bristol's City Academy repeated a response that he had experienced from reluctant public authorities (not the Bristol City Council):

'No we don't do Black History because we don't really have any Black people here.' And you say 'Hmmm, you're missing the point here about, you know, maybe that is more of a need to correct, to make people aware, but ok that's your response.'

The challenge he identified was about making local authorities and parents appreciate the multicultural history of Britain, which would in turn make them appreciate 20<sup>th</sup> century and more recent arrivals as part of this history.

You do get white parents – for want of a better phrase – white parents who feel that the curriculum is being distorted, there is too much Black history, and of course, one of my beliefs, is that Britain's history, everybody's history, is multicultural, because population movement isn't new, the state of it might of changed, and the nature of it might have changed, but they're incomers all through British history. (Interview, 4 April 2011)

However, the 'mainstreaming' of Black History, and the attempt to extend the concern with the history of the African and African Caribbean presence to majority white schools, appears to be a weak spot in the educational response to the bicentenary and more widely. Not just active, majoritarian intolerance but a pervasive lack of interest in minority perspectives may account for some of the difficulties in making progress in this area.

### ***Educational attainment***

The second domain of educational concerns that we have identified before is the somewhat ambiguous connection between the focus on ‘achievement’ and that on ‘equal opportunities’. As a matter of principle, the two are usually thought to coincide: the concern with promoting equality is seen to allow for higher achievement of otherwise disadvantaged pupils. In the Swann Report, for example, “underachievement” was considered largely a “ result of racial prejudice and discrimination on the part of society at large, bearing on ethnic minority home and families, and hence, *indirectly*, on children” (Swann 1985, 768) – while the rest was to be explained by the *direct* experience of discrimination and racial prejudice.

However, the interdependence of achievement and racial justice or equal opportunities is not necessarily reflected in how concerns are balanced in the classroom. In fact, it is suggested that the two may seem to be in conflict. This tension appears conspicuously when the commitment to ‘equal opportunities’ is thought to entail not just support for individual students regardless of their particular cultural, ethnic or religious background but measures, such as the consideration of an African heritage, that are introduced to empower students, make them feel more confident – but do not necessarily pertain in a straightforward way to performance in examinations. In particular the ‘mainstreaming’ of historical concerns that we have discussed previously can hardly be justified with reference to how it increases educational attainment – at least not in a conventional understanding – of white majority pupils.

This tension was emphasized by two teachers we interviewed. The first noted that

obviously *achievement* has to be balanced because there’s many ethnic minority parents that would prefer their children to do well, than to have lip service paid to various sort of cultural issues really (Interview, 1 March 2011)

The second, when prompted on how the two priorities may come together, stressed how

there shouldn’t be tension and that’s why I think we’re so keen to say that if you take into account the equal opportunities agenda then that will raise the achievement of all children around. (Interview, 1 March 2011)

The teacher, however, pointed to widespread uneasiness among her colleagues on how to properly address some of the challenges that an encompassing commitment to ‘equal opportunities’ would pose. In particular when it was seen to require the discussion of sensitive material and continuing experience of racial discrimination,

they’re worried about it. And you know we all blunder, we all make mistakes, we’re all learning, we’ve... what we haven’t got is the confidence ... to actually be able to talk about it, to make the mistakes... ‘We’re only gonna upset that person, that group of people, oh my god, how do I say it’. So it’s easier in some ways, perhaps, for people to step back and embrace the achievement side than embrace, embrace the equal opps. (Interview, 1 March 2011)

This perception was also reinforced by the former Head of History at City Academy who was eager to point out that, rather than a matter of incompetence or principled resistance, teachers had little time to prepare and often experienced “insecurity about areas where they feel there may be a politicized reaction” (Interview, 4 April 2011). Bristol City Council (2007, 11), too, noted that “[t]eachers ... often say that they do not always feel confident in talking about key race equality, cultural or faith issues for fear of using the wrong word, causing offence or exposing their lack of knowledge.” When issues seem not only challenging for their

sensitivity, but also not strictly part of what contributes to educational attainment, it is no surprise that a significant number of teachers may try to avoid them. A fallback position where sensitive issues are avoided, a further member of staff at City Academy suggested, was a kind of individualism that would consider children, but not their cultural background and needs (Discussion Group, 7 July 2011).

### ***The National Story***

A member of the Council's bicentenary team emphasized the significance for the concerns with Abolition 200 to be reflected in the curriculum: "by having that on the National Curriculum, it put a marker as if to say, 'We recognise this'" (Interview, 1 March 2011). As a marker of public recognition, this would be perceived as a sign of appreciation and interest. The way in which the abolition of the slave trade eventually found a place in the History Curriculum, however, appeared protracted: while earlier signals had been given that it wouldn't be included, it eventually turned out to that it would.

Rather than seeing this as an achievement, the incoming Conservative Education Secretary has used the concern with the transatlantic slave-trade as an exemplary case for alleged pathologies of history teaching at British schools. Its inadequacy, Michael Gove suggests, is illustrated by its disavowal of the teaching of names, dates and coherent narratives and the fact that the only two names that are currently included in the History Curriculum were those of William Wilberforce, the initiator of the 1807 vote, and Olaudah Equiano, a former slave and 18<sup>th</sup> century campaigner for abolition (see Loveys 2011). Rather than an attack on their historical personas, this is a critique of allegedly insufficient ways of teaching history at British school. The 'chronological understanding' of issues is seen as underdeveloped (Ferguson 2011b) and students are not provided, Simon Schama suggests, with a sense of the "long arc of time" (cited in Rahim 2010; see also Better History Group 2011). Figures, facts and narratives, it is implied, should not just be exemplary of its more shameful aspects; the concern has to be with "the achievement of brave men and women whose attachment to liberty was sincere and deep" (Gove 2006), and "[o]ur national story can't be told without Churchill at the centre" (Gove cited in Garner 2008).

For the currently ongoing review of the curriculum, Simon Schama was appointed. At the heart of this review, however, there seems to be a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, the emphasis is on the *depoliticization* of the curriculum and Gove came out strongly to suggest that he wanted to "remove everything unnecessary from a curriculum that has been bent out of shape by the weight of material dumped there for political purposes" (Gove 2010). At the same time, there is a strong concern to refocus the subject of history to cover past achievements that, it is suggested, need to be considered for how they inform contemporary understandings of Britishness and allow for a positive sense of national identity – arguably a concern that is political in nature.

One of our respondents, a teacher trainer with profoundly negative views on the curriculum review, pointed out how the existence of multiple perspectives seemed to be increasingly ignored among the proponents of reform:

They talk about our Island story as if there is one island story, one people, and one narrative, and actually that's all fact and, you know, there isn't anything to dispute, which is nonsense and a very poor understanding of history really. (Interview 4 April 2011)

To conclude, there remains the possibility of a majoritarian backlash, fuelled by popular

outrage about ‘special treatment’ and ‘special claims’, in particular when these are seen to displace older national traditions and ‘our history’. The recent debate on the history curriculum signals a declining preparedness to conceive of the ‘national story’ in an encompassing and inclusive way, or to allow for the presence of multiple horizons.

### **Conclusion**

With the mainstreaming of Black History, its connection to achievement and the ongoing debate about the History Curriculum we have introduced three areas of educational concern where various positions are present and various political responses appear possible. The wholesale rejection of non-majority narratives is a fairly pervasive position and, in particular when it works through the populist appeal to how majority narratives are allegedly lost, a real possibility. Moreover, the toleration of alternative minority histories – the sense of Black History being for Black people only – seems reflected in educational practice. To be sure, many of our respondents have emphasized the importance of the cultural self-confidence that results from awareness of one’s historical background and that needs to be developed in education.

The question of how to narrate the national story, to make it more encompassing and allow for the multiplicity of perspectives continues to be contested not only between social majority and minorities but also between and within various post-immigration groups. Increasing demographic differentiation means that there are more narratives to consider. In Bristol, the settlement of Somalis in recent years poses considerable challenges to Council politics but also to how the longer-established African and African-Caribbean groups conceive of their social and cultural positions.

Even without such contemporary difficulties, the concern to reconsider national narratives is bound to be contested and faces considerable obstacles. Maybe the most clear-cut achievement that has emerged from 2007 was the heightened interest and concern with historical narratives and local and national representations. It was not merely the official commemoration but the widening participation of various individuals and groups that points to how multicultural accommodation may be furthered through such contestations. Although the debate was in parts confrontational, bitter and toxic, there are signs of a movement where the concern with historical representations continues, more mature instincts prevail and Colston’s skeleton is further rattled.

### **3. Towards greater understanding? Guidance for Muslim pupils at state schools**

With this case we explore aspects of how the needs of Muslim pupils in British state schools are conceived, and how suggestions on how to address those needs are put forward and contested. This raises questions not only of toleration, acceptance or respect for religious pupils, their heritage and about the accommodation of religion at a school level. As an additional dimension, it entails decisions about what the needs are that require particular consideration. Although they are widely shared points of reference, the needs of children, as well as their interest or well-being, are understood in different ways and are seen – in particular where religion is concerned – to require different kinds of educational responses.

Such differences are conspicuous in the controversy that we explore here. The Muslim Council of Britain’s (MCB) guidance notes *Towards greater understanding. Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils at state schools* tapped into disagreements that are not merely practical or political but reflect a division about educational philosophy and the ethos of state

education.<sup>24</sup> This perception is reinforced by differences of emphasis among our respondents. While some, such as Tahir Alam, the author of the MCB guidance, suggest that “children are going to do well because of ... stability in their lifestyle, in their belief systems” (Interview, 6 April 2011), others emphasize “openness”, “contact” and “communication” as important conditions of well-being (Tehmina Kazi, Interview, 30 April 2011). In its notes, the MCB underlined the “spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of Muslim children” (MCB 2007, 18). British Muslims for a Secular Democracy (BMSD 2010, 6), responding directly to the MCB, suggests that “[m]any educators have over-emphasized Muslimness at the expense of Britishness and the whole child”.<sup>25</sup>

The following explores contestations over the accommodation of Muslim pupils in state schools by focusing on the MCB notes and competing guidance issued by BMSD. We first explore relevant aspects of the nature of the contestation over religion in British state education, as well as some ambiguities in understandings of accommodation. Secondly, we consider the claims and counter-claims in the guidance with an interest in arguments and justifications offered, though with less emphasis on the content of the measures that were proposed (see, however, Appendix Table 3). We conclude with a discussion on how to conceive of the various positions that are discernible with the conceptual toolkit of ACCEPT Pluralism (Dobbernack and Modood 2011). We suggest that, considerable disagreement over principles notwithstanding, the majority of these converge around a minimalist understanding of respect-based accommodation. While, more controversially, understandings of British education can also be seen to support requests for independent Muslim education, the denial of even basic requests – the intolerant option – appears at odds with such conventional understandings.

### *Debating the principles of education*

In the debates that concern us here, different emphases do not need to be understood as polar opposites. But disagreement, in as much as it arises from different conceptions of pupils’ needs, means that we are moving on unstable ground in our discussion of the meaning and scope of acceptance. After all, practices that are harmful to children or adverse to their needs would usually be considered as intolerable by default. As a site of debate about principles, this means that the field of education shows a certain perfectionist bias and that the minimalism of ‘gritted teeth’ tolerance may be more difficult to defend than in other fields of debate. Accordingly, principled positions of intolerance and respect may appear more frequent and seem more defensible than those of compromise. However, to what extent these

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<sup>24</sup> The MCB’s guidance notes stand in a line of similar texts, some of which were published for particular LEAs with high numbers of Muslim pupils. The Birmingham LEA (n.d.) in 1988 was one of the first to issue guidance notes for the accommodation of Muslim pupils. Anticipating the title of the MCB notes, the IQRA Trust (1991) issued a document entitled ‘Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils: advice for teachers and LEAs’.

<sup>25</sup> While disagreement may result from different understandings of the role of religion for the individual development of children or in public life generally, in this case it is reinforced by some degree of organisational animosity. The MCB aspires to be a “national representative Muslim umbrella body” and is a loose coalition of roughly 500 affiliated organisations, mosques, charities or independent Muslim schools. Its credo is ‘Working for the Common Good’, though it has been accused in the past – such as by BMSD and its trustees – of a conservative bias, insufficient distance to extremists, and claiming to be representative despite only speaking for a minority of British Muslims; its relationship with Government has experienced ups and downs (Vidino 2011). In turn, British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD) presents itself as a counter-organisation that unites Muslims with a different understanding of the public place of Islam. Its board of trustees was until recently led by the prominent author and journalist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. The extent of its membership and support is unclear, but it is a much smaller organisation than the MCB.

discursive dynamics are reflected in educational practice is a different question that we consider later in the report.

Similar to ambiguities in how children's needs are conceived, there is related disagreement over the purpose of education. While the importance of the transmission of factual knowledge may be undisputed to some extent, other objectives are more contested.<sup>26</sup> Education is usually seen to be concerned with the formation of individuals that can confidently participate in the life of their social environment and aspire to a measure of 'roundedness' and character development. Educational priorities are thus contested in line with diverging conceptions of, at its most fundamental, the 'good life' or what it means to be a 'good human being' (Halstead 2005, 118).<sup>27</sup> Mark Halstead (2004, 522), for example, sees the following dividing line between "liberal educationalists" and Islam where education "will be discussed in terms of the balanced growth of all sides of the individual's personality, including the spiritual and moral, leading to a higher level of religious understanding and commitment in all areas of life". What it means for education to be "wholesome" (BMSD 2010, 5, 9, 11) or "holistic" (BMSD 2010, 6), or to promote "greater understanding and tolerance, respect, equality and social harmony and cohesion" (MCB 2007, 19), may depend on foundational assumptions about educational objectives. There is, then, considerable space for disagreement.

Significantly, it is not just secular purposes in education that see themselves challenged by the religiosity of post-immigration groups. Vice versa, the concern among British Muslims in the education of their children is to a significant extent the result of anxiety about the loss of cultural traditions and beliefs. In graphic detail, Sahib Mustaqim Bleher (1996, 63) draws a picture of this anxiety where the "outside world is [experienced as] a raging monster waiting to eat up your children. ... You send them to school and they come back as enemies who despise you and regard you as ignorant and a hindrance to ambitions that their friends and teachers have put into their heads." The experience, as it is portrayed by Bleher and others, is thus one of a rift between the aspirations and needs of Muslim pupils and the purposes of state education not only regarding spirituality but also the conditions of educational success.

When asked on how his interest in the education of British Muslim children emerged, Tahir Alam pointed to this connection between cultural self-confidence and achievement:

[In] our first generation, actually, children, did really well... But the following generations that came through, they were, from a behaviour point of view, from an Islamic values point of view, their values were eroding... Educationally they were failing and they got into crime and so on... They were becoming kind of, an underclass community... So I was very disturbed by this, 'What the hell is going on here? What is this? You know, why are all of the rubbish schools, all the crap schools, basically, in our areas? What are they playing at? And what's the reason for this?' (Interview 6 April 2011)

For Muslim educationalists and a significant number of Muslim parents, the response to this puzzle would probably be twofold. To increase attainment, an institutional bias against Muslim children would need to be overcome and resources be made accessible. Beyond such requests, certainty of culture and religion underpins educational attainment. Culture, religion and school should work together to instil values and aspirations which steer children towards

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<sup>26</sup> Although the weight given to factual and instrumental knowledge may also be disputed. See Ameli, Azam and Merali (2005) or the position paper by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (2004).

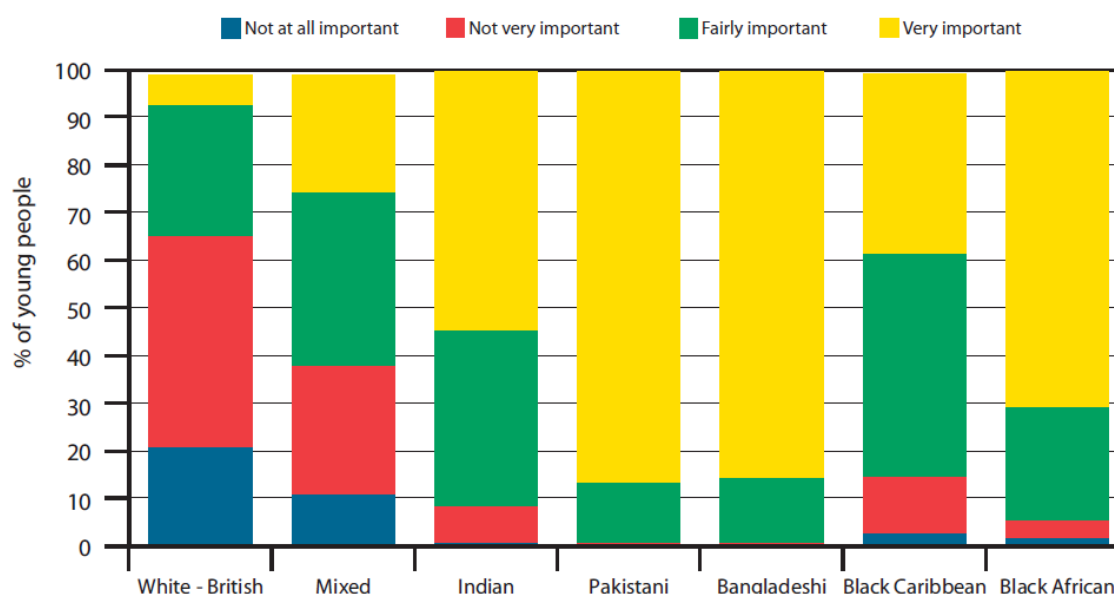
<sup>27</sup> The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (2004, 19) in a position paper on Muslim Education sees some proximity between Muslim educational priorities and Steiner and Montessori approaches.

educational success and protect them from influences that undermine this. If children develop a sense of cultural self-confidence, they will behave to a higher standard.

This connection explains the frustration that Muslim parents may experience when state education is seen to be complicit in children's exposure to harmful influences and when educational institutions, rather than supporting it, are seen to undermine the ethos that allows for educational success. The suggestion, then, is that for "many Muslim parents it appears that the education in state-funded schools is imposing a set of moral, spiritual, cultural and social values, not of their choice and certainly not in consultation with them" (Khan-Cheema 1996, 87). Mark Halstead (2005, 106) points to how the state system was considered spiritually and morally inadequate and, thus, to be "at least partly responsible for the growth of drug addiction, the increasing number of Muslims in custody and the inner city riots of 2001".

It is significant, then, to understand Muslim claims vis-à-vis state schools as a spectrum of positions. Requests may be made for certain practices to be allowed, such as religious dress or for the accommodation of religious needs, such as for *halal* school meals. They may, however, also refer to how religiosity itself is conceived at school and by the school, tolerated or even reflected in its ethos. Beyond the scope of tolerance, these claims would then be concerned with how to achieve the normality of Muslim religiosity in a school environment or even with its positive reinforcement. Such claims and positions have been contested in particular for how they might lead to 'separatism' or entail a departure from principles of state neutrality.

Figure 2: Importance of religion in young person's life (DfES 2006, 23)<sup>28</sup>



Despite considerable disagreement, there is some recognition that the significance of religion in particular for South Asian post-immigration groups is empirically given and requires a constructive response from public institutions (see Figure 2).<sup>29</sup> Whether such responses are borne out of pragmatic calculations, the desire to 'just get along' or principled commitments is often unclear. The localism of British education, with various arrangements in place across

<sup>28</sup> This table is also displayed in the MCB (2007, 18) guidance.

<sup>29</sup> See Modood et al. (1997) on the particular significance of religion for Pakistani or Bangladeshi post-immigration groups

individual LEAs, means that a variety of solutions have been developed in response to local conditions and particular challenges (Halstead 2005, 120). This allows some schools to experiment, to be more accommodating and pioneering but this variety is not unproblematic, since the scope of accommodation in schools or LEAs often appears related to the size of their Muslim school population or may result from initiatives by individual headteachers or school governors and, thus, appear somewhat random and patchy.

Responding to such concerns, the MCB's guidance notes were intended to be a comprehensive collection, presented in an "easy-to-use format" (MCB 2007, 19). The document would point to "best practice already implemented in many schools around the country so that Muslim pupils can feel fully part of the state schools they attend" (Alam 2007). It emerged as a result of discussions at the MCB's Education Committee and, its author suggests, in response to various queries that the MCB had received over the years: it "captures much of the good practice from various schools around the country" (MCB 2007, 19).<sup>30</sup>

### ***'Towards greater understanding'?***

Before setting out its practical advice, the document includes a statement of principles for a 'Muslim inclusive approach'. The suggestion is that all

children, to whatever extent possible, whatever their background, should be educated in the fullness of their being in consistency with their beliefs and the wishes of their parents, in a spirit that values their multiple identities (faith, cultural and British). This will contribute to nurturing self-esteem and self-confidence, forming the basis for understanding and appreciation for the heritage and beliefs of others. (MCB 2007, 17)

Addressing such needs, the document suggests, provides for self-confidence and esteem and supports the "personal development" (ibid., 18) of children, whereas failure to do so is "likely to have an alienating effect where pupils may feel that they are not valued". Muslim pupils, it is suggested, have a claim to "see themselves reflected positively in the ethos, curriculum and life of their school" and this respect for pupils' cultural heritage is a vital precondition for their educational attainment. Tahir Alam elaborates on this link as follows:

children who are very confident in who they are, with self-esteem, self-worth, are confident with where they're coming from. Those children are going to do well because of their stability in their lifestyle, in their belief systems... and they kind of know where they are and where they're going. And if children become confused about those kinds of issues, or they think that their background is somehow subordinate, then this actually sends a message which is very different to them. It means that they receive a message at a psychological level, at an intellectual level, that to progress in society they have to adopt the ways of mannerisms of, if you like, other people, which actually are not genuine for them. (Interview 6 April 2011)

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<sup>30</sup> The MCB guidance notes cover religious dress (MCB 2007, 20-2), school meals (23-4), provisions for prayer (25-7), during Ramadan (28-32), Islamic festivals (34-35), Physical Education (36-40), Religious Education (41-3), Collective Worship (44-6), Sex and Relationship Education (47-50), language teaching (50-1), the arts (52-3), resources in the school library (54-5), educational visits (56-7) and 'further issues' (58). The BMSD guidance covers clothing (7-8); swimming (8), The Arts (8-9), forced marriages (9-10), learning about other faiths (10-1), Sex Education (11-2), Friday Prayers (12), Absences from school (12), Eid Festivals (12-3) and gender segregation (13). For a comparison of areas where both organisations have made suggestions, see Appendix Table 3.



The connection between cultural certainty, self-confidence and educational attainment is, then, conceived in a manner that runs parallel to the connections drawn in the case of Black History, though in the case of Black History *awareness* may be more emphasized than *appreciation* or *certainty*. While much of the focus of the guidance is on provisions for religious practice and for sensitivity towards religious beliefs, the positive representation of the Muslim faith is an issue of some significance. Requests to allow children to practice the requirements of their faith in the various chapters of the report are usually accompanied by suggestions on how the non-Muslim school population should be engaged and brought to understand their significance for Muslims pupils. The BMSD guidance, by contrast, can be understood as suggestions for how Muslim pupils can be made to feel part of a multi-faceted but shared British culture.

### ***Three issues: ‘Muslims’, ‘should’ and ‘compromise’***

Already the notion of certainty of culture or belief points to issues that seem not entirely straightforward. After all, while certainty may be a value for some, others may either experience or even relish uncertainty as their preferred modality of identity. There are three further ambiguities in the document that have been singled out by some of its critics.

1) The designator ‘Muslim’, which is used in the document to introduce expectations of Muslim pupils and their parents, may be understood as either referring to the reality of actual claims coming from Muslims as a social group or by reference to faith-based demands. It seems that the intention of the author of the notes was the latter: although there may be a certain assumption among the MCB that Muslims should be practicing and thus can be expected to put forward particular claims for the accommodation of religious practices, there is an acknowledgment that this is not the case for every British Muslim. Tahir Alam remarks that “if a Muslim does not consider it necessary to wear the *hijab* or does not object to swimming in a mixed-gender environment or communal naked showering, then this is not [an] issue for the school and no advice is required” (Interview, 6 April 2011). However, in objections to the document, this distinction may have been lost and it was alleged that the MCB presumed to speak for the entirety of British Muslims, despite the diversity of understandings within this group, and furthermore to impose a religious-cultural model (Interview, 16 June 2011). Dean Godson (2007) of Policy Exchange perceived in the document the intention to ‘Arabize’ British Muslims.

2) A certain disjuncture between requirements derived from faith, as embodied in scripture or historical practice, and the actual practices of a social group is probably inevitable, and certainly not exclusive to Islam and British Muslims. Moreover, a similar distinction also seemed to underpin different understandings of the nature of requests in the guidance notes – to the references to *should*. The right-wing think tank *Policy Exchange*, for example, noted disapprovingly that in the guidance the “word ‘should’ is used over ninety times, mostly in demands for concessions” (Bald et al. 2010, 29). It further remarked that the report gave “the impression that the onus is on schools to adapt to Muslims, rather than the other way round ... it encourages Muslim parents to make maximal use of their legal rights” (ibid., 30). This critique is mirrored in the responses from BMSD representatives who suggested that the document “was pandering excessively, it didn’t sort of allow any space for compromise, or resolution: the whole thrust of the document was about make such-and-such demand and ... it’ll be granted” (Interview, 30 March 2011).

When questioned on this line of critique, Tahir Alam made the following distinction to explain the nature of the requests. The word ‘*should*’.

relates to the, to the obligation upon the Muslim to do that or not. That relates to 'should'. So for example, if I have to pray five times a day, that's gonna appear as a 'should'. Because that's, that's not necessarily what you can do, it's not dependent upon what you can do. It's dependent upon what the Muslim has to do, and therefore we are saying that you *should* do your best to make such an accommodation. And that 'should' is traced back to the obligation. So where, for example, it is purely optional, in other words it's a luxury, in other words it's not a religious obligation, we've not said anything. (Interview 6 April 2011)

The subject position of 'Muslim' is conceived religiously, not sociologically. It is conceived with reference to Islamic faith positions, and neither with the social practices of British Muslims in mind nor with the diversity of more or less devout orientations that can be found in this social group.

3) Such differences may, finally, also explain disagreement over the possibility to *compromise*. The criticism from *Policy Exchange* – that Muslims were encouraged to make “maximal use of their rights” – seems to be based on the assumption that such rights were largely or entirely optional, similar maybe to various lifestyle choices that one can make depending on inclinations and taste. From the MCB's perspective, however, what is demanded is basic respect for religious pupils, and the request to 'compromise' would, in turn, be understood as the request to compromise on one's faith. The rejection of such requests is experienced as particularly onerous since, on the spectrum of possible claims, the requests in the guidance notes are not seen to be particularly far-ranging. They are predicated on a minimalist notion of respect for Muslim pupils and the kind of respect that is due to them as individuals extends to their religious identities.

This kind of respect for religiosity, not necessarily for religion, is contrasted with other, more wide-ranging requests. In Muslim majority neighbourhoods, but also basically wherever the according initiatives may find sufficient support, these may not just be for accommodation and allowances within the state sector but for the introduction of 'Muslim schools'. Tahir Alam suggests that the notes were

just saying practically what schools should do to make a Muslim child feel comfortable, ... it is not asking to make the school into a Muslim school, you know? It's not asking for that, although I could ask for that, of course, on the basis of the other principle, that we are right to educate our children according to the wishes of their parents, not according to the wishes of some guy who's never seen the child and never seen the parent either, if you know what I mean? ... But I'm not really talking about that, I'm saying that if schools are, you know, serving the Muslim community, they should make, you know, every effort to accommodate them, in a way that respects them, values them, and so on. That's the basic principle of respect. That's all the document is saying, very basic things. (Interview, 6 April 2011)

The requests that are summarized in the notes are, thus, presented as “very practical, very mild” and contrasted with other legitimate requests, such as the introduction of Muslim schools. The issues to what extent independent schools would be desirable to provide for education according to Islamic principles is somewhat disputed. However, acquiescence to state education is not infrequently presented as the result of pragmatic, not principled, choices. The compromise, then, is this acquiescence to public education and this compromise will be perceived as more problematic where 'basic respect' isn't forthcoming. These request do not appear particularly far-fetched as conventional understandings of education in Britain, the role envisaged for civil society and the focus on neighbourhood provision resonate with

Islamic priorities. Mark Halstead (2004, 526) suggests that in Islam “education was not an activity separated from other aspects of society; it was rooted in the community it served, responding to its needs and aspirations and preserving its values and beliefs.”<sup>31</sup> The number of independent Muslim schools has grown in recent years and there has also been a slow increase of Muslim schools within the state system.

### *Reactions and critique*

In the rejection of the guidance, various lines usually mingle and are not always easy to separate for what is the result of principled disagreement or based on expressions of indignation, knee-jerk or otherwise. Often, a certain alarmism is palpable, which at its most populist extreme – for example in an article in the *Washington Times* (2007) – sees a direct connection between acquiescence to demands in the guidance notes and the erection of a “Shariah state”. Dean Godson, Research Director at the think tank *Policy Exchange*. Godson (2007) stated in *The Times* that the document was a

charter for segregation of the sexes – and urges strict controls on how dance, drama and sports are organised. More Arabic lessons all round, too – in line with the traditional Islamist aim of ‘Arabising’ Britain’s predominantly South Asian Muslims.

A prominent actors involved in the drafting of the competing BMSD guidance notes warned of “tribal customs coming from Saudia Arabia” and how these amounted to “cultural perversions that have nothing to do with Islam” (Interview, 16 June 2011). Parts of the national tabloid media equally commented on the guidance and occasionally misconstrued the MCB’s position, probably intentionally so such as when the *Daily Express* summarized the notes as follows: “Muslims: ‘Ban Un-Islamic Schools’” (Milland 2007).<sup>32</sup>

Among the more principled positions that seem to underpin objections to the guidance, issues of state neutrality and an anxiety about ethnic or religious separatism in education rank highly. The MCB, suggested that its document should be understood as an “an agenda for promoting greater integration. ... not a demand list as some detractors want people to believe” (Alam 2007). By contrast, Shaaz Mahboob for British Muslims for Secular Democracy (BMSD 2007) commented that the

recommendations, should they be implemented by schools, would not only serve to increase the segregation of Muslim pupils from their non-Muslim peers, who may grow up viewing Muslim pupils as those unduly awarded concessions and treated somewhat differently, thereby creating a wider gulf between the communities in the years to come.

In the critique of ‘separatism’ it is emphasised how acquiescence to requests might fuel resentment on the part of non-Muslim pupils. Mahboob suggested that the guidance was not only “impractical and divisive” but posed a threat for how conservative notions of religious observance would be generalized and schools “forced into acceptance and implementation by undue pressure being put on them by hard-line organisations such as the MCB”.

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<sup>31</sup> This local orientation has recently been reinforced in a new drive towards Academies and Free Schools. Regarding these, right-wring commentators have expressed considerable uneasiness about how this drive might lead to the extension of the ‘faith school’ sector and to an increasing number of Muslim schools (MacEoin 2009; Bald et al. 2010)

<sup>32</sup> The MCB had claimed no such thing and subsequently submitted a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) regarding distortions in the *Daily Express* story ([www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/lettertoPCC.doc](http://www.mcb.org.uk/uploads/lettertoPCC.doc)).

Muslim parents and pupils who are otherwise liberal minded and flexible in their approach towards practising their religion would also come under social and peer pressure to conform to the general notion that all Muslims (parents and pupils) wish to see these recommendations implemented within the schools. (BMSD 2007)

Conspicuously, it seems it is not the illegitimacy of the principles that are reflected in the MCB guidance that is at the core of these objections – not the MCB’s reference to “basic principles of respect” – but various practical and organisational issues as well as the intended or unintended effects of the guidance if it was implemented. Moreover there are differences between respective understandings of religious identities, whether these are worthy of respect, and what this respect entails, such as regarding the possibility for compromise and interaction with others who have no or different religious identities.

The rejection of the guidance, however, is primarily justified with reference to its allegedly ‘divisive’ effects, to its impracticality or for how its adoption would be experienced as an imposition of uniformly conservative practices on populations of Muslim pupils that are diverse. These concerns are clearly significant. Respect for religious pupils is supported by the same principles that would point to respect for the freedom to practices, for example, a non-religious identity and double standards of respect, where they exist, may be legitimately criticized. However, it is not clear how this would amount to a compelling response to claims for accommodation based on respect for Muslim pupils.

### ***BMSD’s alternative guidance and the pitfalls of ‘culture’***

In light of this uncertainty the 2010 guidance that BMSD issued in response to the MCB’s earlier document elucidates some sources of a more principled disagreement. While the guidance was envisaged as an alternative to the MCB document, the rejection of the MCB positions that BMSD (2007) had issued previously is muted in the document (and there is generally a sense in which BMSD varies between more strident and muted expressions of its objections to the MCB’s positions). Its emphasis is on ‘reasonable’ requests and ‘compromise’. Tehmina Kazi, BMSD’s director, suggested as a primary motivation for the drafting of the competing guidance, that the MCB notes “didn’t strike a good balance between the interests of the teacher, the student, and the parent” (Interview 30 March 2011).

The issue of compromise, of course, is complicated where faith-based demands are concerned. However, there is an explication in the guidance on why ‘compromise’ should be a possibility. Conspicuously (in capital letters), BMSD (2010, 6) alleges that

[p]ractices and beliefs that define groups and individuals are precious, but they cannot become the sole basis for policies and politics. CULTURE IS DYNAMIC, not static and set in stone forever.

This exhortation about culture is linked to the encouragement of British Muslims to overcome “disengagement” and develop a “sense of national belonging” – which had previously been lacking “partly because of racism, partly because of self exclusion and myths of return” (ibid.). The position of cultural self-confidence that the MCB considers a precondition for educational attainment, but also a good in itself, is rejected. For BMSD, it seems this does not provide sufficient grounds for making requests.

Positions within BMSD on these issues may differ, but explications by one of the authors regarding the need to *deculturalise* Islam are instructive:

As long as you project Islam as culture, Muslims are going to have problems integrating into Western societies. That is the issue. That should be a major recommendation of your project. As long as they are seeing culture as religion Muslim will never be fully integrated, never. (Interview, 16 June 2011).

This interviewee considers conservative religious dress, such as the *niqab*, as expression of “tribal customs coming from Saudia Arabia” and “cultural perversions that have nothing to do with Islam”. His objection, which he forcefully supports with reference to general equality, is part of a wholesale rejection of cultural practices that he considers a distortion of – and alien to – the religious core. He also has considerable misgivings about a variety of further types of dress, such as *shalwar kameez*, or practices, including facial hair, in as much as they are understood as expressions of Islam. His notion of the way ahead for British Muslims is that “Islam should not be a culturally based... I want to see British Muslims, in other words: a British culture with Islam as religion” (Interview, 16 June 2011).

A problem for this position, of course, is that a significant number of British Muslims, the majority some would suggest, do not share this deculturalised conception of Islam. They aim to a varying extent either for the preservation of some cultural practice or, more frequently, for some kind of adaptation that allows for some ethno-religious customs to be actualised in the diaspora. The distinction between the religious and the cultural may not be shared in the way envisaged by BMSD and may point to religious practices that seem rather alien to a significant number of British Muslims. For some, clearly, the idea of deculturalised Islam may appear unproblematic or appealing, but a majority of British Muslims would need to be ‘reformed’ to comply with this conception. Some coercion would be necessary for them to conform in their religious practice to exhortations that are, though only in elements, included in the BMSD guidance notes and reiterated – much more strongly – by one of its authors.

### ***Principles and practices***

Where BMSD conceives of identities as dynamic, the MCB puts emphasis on certainty and self-confidence. There seems to be some principled disagreement, then, that is informed by different conceptions of pupils’ needs, of how to understand culture, and its role in the religious practice of British Muslims. Generally, however, it seems that this disagreement does neither underpin radically different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils nor of important objectives in the education of Muslims. Both guidance notes claim that their perspectives would most suitably lead to heightened achievement among Muslim pupils. Different from the emphasis of the MCB notes, the BMSD highlights the need for “understanding both ways” where, previously, “[t]oo often the traffic has been one way” (BMSD 2010, 5). Parents could be expected to “compromise for the greater good” (ibid.) and thus to withdraw their requests for special consideration if these turned out to be too burdensome for schools. Where the MCB document focuses on the kinds of claims that schools should be prepared to encounter and accommodate, BMSD is concerned with questioning these claims where they are portrayed as ‘unreasonable’ or ‘conservative’ (ibid., 9, 13) and with providing headmasters with argumentative resources to refuse demands that are portrayed as excessive or harmful.

These are significant issues that, in particular where the ‘protection’ of non-religious pupils is concerned, can be defended in strong principled terms. Surprisingly, however, deep conflict over principles does not translate in equal measure into disagreement over the practicalities of accommodation. Suggestions made by both organisations show considerable convergence on some issues, a certain differences of tone and emphasis and a few – not many –

suggestions that point to genuine disagreement. BMSD, too, lists various requests that religious Muslims could legitimately expect to be accommodated by schools and gives practical advice on how schools may respond to such requests (see Appendix Table 3).

Regarding religious dress, BMSD (2010, 8) suggests that it is “perfectly legitimate for a school to refuse to compromise on the *jilbab* and the *niqab*, both for health and safety and integration reasons”. The MCB (2007, 20) suggests that “[i]n public boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as ‘hijab’” and adds, in a footnote, that for “some Muslims fulfilling this requirement may mean the wearing of the *jilbab*”. The *jilbab* has been contentious: while it is accommodated in the uniform code of some schools, others – even those run by Muslim headmistresses – refused to accommodate the *jilbab* and have been found right to do so (House of Lords 2006). Beyond this controversy, it is maybe most conspicuous that the *hijab* is uncontested, and some basic requirements for the accommodation of religious dress are acknowledged – though not encouraged – by BMSD, too. The same logic – an emphasis on extreme cases, and a certain lack of enthusiasm for, though the implied acceptance of ‘normal’ claims – runs through the BMSD document. The MCB, by contrast, highlights the normality of its claims and fails to mention situations where exaggerated or outrageous requests should not be accommodated.<sup>33</sup>

There is neither the indication that claims for accommodation based on respect are radically challenged by BMSD, nor that the MCB goes substantially beyond these ideas of accommodation. Both organisations in their respective guidance, as can be seen in Appendix 3, gravitate towards a respect-based minimum of acceptance. This minimum is not spelt out by BMSD and is not the exclusive focus of the MCB, which at least hints at more far-ranging requests, including for educational self-determination and for what Juila Ipgrave (2010) has coined “epistemology-based inclusion”.

The disjuncture between violent disagreement over principles and relative proximity on practices also highlights a puzzling feature of the recent multiculturalism debate. David Cameron (2011) announced the need to have “less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism” and renounced the “doctrine of state multiculturalism”. Similar to the principled disagreement between MCB and BMSD, Cameron’s emphatic rhetoric may have little policy content. Many people worry about residential segregation, inward looking communities and how this is reflected in British schools. But these are not the result of policies and a different population distribution could only be achieved, to coin a phrase, by muscular illiberalism (Modood 2011b).

Regarding the minimalist, respect-based accommodation of Muslim religiosity in state education, this illiberalism is not on the table. Principled disagreement over the place of religion in public life does not lead to radically different conceptions – at least not in the mainstream – of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils and how these should be accommodated. Suggestions that fall behind such understandings would have to break with enshrined notions of liberal respect for individual choice as well as with conventional understandings of practice and ethos of British education. Although requests for such a break have been made (Godson 2007; MacEoin 2009; Hargey 2011), they would need to overcome considerable obstacles before they could hope to inform educational practice.

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<sup>33</sup> Tahir Alam acknowledges the existence of “unreasonable requests” and that the guidance may be beneficial for headteachers to deal with these (Interview, 6 April 2011). It is not clear why this purpose of the guidance is not acknowledged in the document itself.

In this second case we have examined contestations that are exemplary for the debate over the accommodation of religious identities and practices in British public life. Some of the conflict in this field can be explained by entrenched animosity between representatives of organisations with different aims and membership. Principled disagreement, moreover, is evident, such as on how to conceive of British Muslims as a social and faith group, on the connections between ‘religion’ and ‘culture’, and on the possibility of compromise where faith-based claims are concerned. Generally, however, it seems that principled disagreement does not necessarily lead to radically different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices made by Muslim pupils. A minimalist understanding of respect for their identities and informs both guidance notes that we have examined here, although this understanding is often only implied.

British educational practice, as it is institutionally enshrined and continues to be developed, is consonant with this idea of respect. Suggestions that do not live up to this have to break with liberal notions of respect for individual choice as well as with conventional understandings of education in Britain. Even the main driver ‘beyond’ the respect-based accommodation of Muslims within the state system – the request for independent Muslim schools – is conceivable without implying a break with conventional understandings, though it is more controversial.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, requests to disallow for example religious dress may be made on a level of abstract generality, for example when the claim is that Islam needs to be ‘deculturalised’. It is unlikely that such requests will be successful or appealing if considered for the coercive measures they would require in practice. Immigration minister Damian Green, referring to France’s ‘burka ban’, recently remarked that “[t]elling people what they can and can’t wear, if they’re just walking down the street, is a rather un-British thing to do” (BBC 2010). Although the burka is not what is at stake in the contestation over the two different guidance documents, Green’s proposition arguably captures a prevailing spirit as far as religion and British public life are concerned.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The kind of acceptance that requires a reconsideration of national stories and the one that requires respectful treatment of religious pupils are different from one another and we have brought out some aspects of this difference. In both cases, however, issues are at stake that are insufficiently understood with tolerance. Tolerance, as a morally minimalist position of forbearance or grudging acceptance, does not adequately characterize claims towards multicultural accommodation in state schools, nor does it reflect the remaking of the national story explored in the second case. Among the multiplicity of claims and positions, toleration may adequately characterise some, though even the creation of educational spaces exclusively within majority Black schools may not be usefully understood as toleration or forbearance.

We have labelled the respect for religious identities that underpins the accommodation of Muslim pupils in state education ‘minimalist’, though by this we mean that this position is widely shared and distinct from other claims, such as from those for changes to the ethos of state education or for independent Muslim schools. This respect-based accommodation is a position that exceeds the forbearance of tolerance – even if we follow ‘respect conceptions’ of toleration, such as Forst’s (2003) – for how it has a tendency to value not just the act of

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<sup>34</sup> Although the recent drive towards ‘free schools’ and ‘academies’ promises to increase the space for Muslim faith schools, in the past their introduction frequently failed due to practical and financial constraints. It remains to be seen how many Muslim ‘free schools’ and ‘Academies’ will be established.

choosing, but the content of choice, such as by showing respect for religion (Modood 2010).

An interesting convergence between the two cases is their respective concern with identity and attainment. A lack of cultural certainty and a negative appreciation of one's heritage are seen to result in a lack of self-confidence, in the loosening of behavioural standards and in educational failure. In the case of African Caribbean pupils the impact of a positive appreciation of the positive aspects of Black History are emphasized. The MCB suggests that Islam provides moral signposts and cultural self-confidence that leads to higher aspirations.

Both conceptions have been challenged and may need to be critically amended. As long as majority stereotypes are left intact, the concern with Black culture and identity may seem apolitical and inconsequential. Education for British Muslims, some suggest, has to avoid the kind of ethno-religious navel-gazing that makes an adaptation of faith requirements, or their actualisation in mixed environments, impossible. Whatever the merits of these objections, which may be made in a variety of ways, they point to challenges that arise when the self-referential concern with group identities recognizes its limitations and begins to look towards the mainstream. The re-making of this mainstream – for example of the national story, or the normalization of the Muslim presence in Britain – points to negotiations that may be challenging for majority and minorities.

Such challenges and the debates that we have examined in this report take place while obituaries to British multiculturalism continue to be written. Historically, political multiculturalism flourished as Labour came to accept ethno-religious communitarianism as it had previously accepted other assertive identity movements. Muslim faith schools, religious discrimination legislation, incitement to religious hatred, bringing Muslims into the networks of governance, including a religion question in the Census – all of these have happened well after the original 'death of multiculturalism'. Indeed, some of them after 9/11 and 7/7, two other events that were meant to have killed off multiculturalism. One of the very last acts of New Labour was the passing of the Equality Act, which for the first time put the claims of the religion and belief strand on the same level as race. Initially having religious equality legislation because of an EU directive, Labour left office with legislation that went well beyond anything found in Europe (on race as well as a religion).

One of the reasons that multiculturalism does not seem to die despite having its last rites continually read out, is that there are very few policies at stake. The new coalition government between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats is not exempt, and education is a case in point. Clearly, the renunciation of state multiculturalism is neither seen to imply the exclusion of religious practices within the state system, nor a departure from a system where religious schools have a place (in fact, Coalition policies might lead to an expansion of this sector). The relative narrowing of historical understandings and a certain nostalgic spree among Conservatives might lead to less pluralistic understandings of British history, but this contraction does not seem to be primarily connected to the 'death of multiculturalism'.

More problematic than these declarations of death is how a sense of white working class dispossession is mobilized point to the illegitimacy of minority requests. Steve Fenton critically remarks that public recognition and cultural inclusion for minority identities cannot be kept separate from "wider problems of social integration applicable to the whole population":

Ethnic majoritarians would ask: what can the 'ethnic majority' expect to gain from rethinking the national story? Who gains from multiculturalism? For 'rethinking the



nation' to be successful it must have a big message for the ethnic majority. For the present, at least, it is not clear what that message is. (Fenton 2011, 15)

Others, of course, have proposed notions of multicultural nationhood that respond to this dilemma, and not just for minorities (CMEB 2000; Modood 2007). It is clear from the two cases that we have considered in this report that a significant challenge to minority accommodation comes from mobilized majority resentment and from the notion that the accommodation of post-immigration groups, following the rules of a zero-sum game, means majority dispossession. The recent economic downturn, protracted debates about the economic benefits of immigration, and long-term structural change in the British economy do not make it any easier to challenge such conceptions.

This also means that toleration remains relevant and that – though more demanding positions are available and have been achieved to some extent – the United Kingdom is not entirely secure in its achievements of equality, respect and acceptance. When claims for public recognition and equal respect are rejected, the fallback position may not be toleration but intolerance and an outright rejection of more minimal positions of forbearance. This is a possibility that is illustrated by the vitriolic reaction to the MCB's guidance notes (Godson 2007; Milland 2007); it is equally palpable in the possibility of a majoritarian backlash against the consideration of non-white people in the British national story.

## IV. Political Challenges: The ‘Muslim Vote’ in 2010

### 1. Introduction

This report explores aspects of the participation of ethnic minority populations in British politics and asks how it can be characterised within the normative framework of the ACCEPT Pluralism project (Dobbernack and Modood 2011). It focuses on initiatives that mobilized British Muslim constituents in the run-up to the General Election 2010, and the strategic thinking and positioning that was discernible among prominent actors in these mobilizations. By considering their political advocacy, the report seeks to provide an account of the environment for Muslim agency in British politics, for the articulation of claims and political practice that occurs on the basis, though not exclusively, of a religious identity category. Although political rights for British post-immigration groups have long been established, their participation in mainstream politics is not unproblematic. Minority citizens that run for elections or highlight issues of concern for their communities often do so cautiously. And Muslim political actors in particular are faced with special circumstances. They see themselves confronted by the alleged exceptionality of their claims-making, which is highlighted in a public discourse that is critical of ‘sectarianism’ and ‘identity politics’. In response there is an evident desire to project and practice civic identities, to demonstrate their normality and a commitment to the ‘common good’. Muslim advocacy groups are concerned to repudiate misperceptions of Muslim political agency as exceptional, ‘sectarian’ and impossible to accommodate. This report focuses on such efforts in the course of the general election 2010.

‘Misrecognition’, the report’s conceptual focus, assists a consideration of this type of political agency. It allows us to explore how actors respond to perceived pressures, make claims and project identities in opposition to alleged misperceptions or the refusal to acknowledge their desired self-descriptions. To this end three key issues concerning conceptualization and application are worth registering at the outset:

- Misrecognition is a distortion which may be based on a partially correct perception but which ignores features that are important to the group thus (mis)recognized. We acknowledge that minority struggles over recognition are usually for the removal of perceived distortions (against *mis*recognition) as well as for the validation of desired identity claims (against *non*-recognition). Despite such overlaps we distinguish between misrecognition and non-recognition and suggest that especially the former requires attention for its philosophical lineage as well as for its empirical modes. We build upon a recent literature that deepens and expands this concept and we locate misrecognition in relation to the normative framework of ACCEPT Pluralism.
- By highlighting ‘misrecognition’ we do not suggest that Muslim agency can be reduced to a reactive concern with social stigmas. While this concern is apparent, it is no more (and no less) than a starting point for political involvement. There is a diversity of ideas and strategies that are adopted in the movement *beyond* misrecognition and this diversity, we suggest, has to be of as much interest as the way in which Muslim actors see themselves misrecognized.

- It is furthermore important to point out that the focus on misrecognition does not mean to idealize the Muslim contribution to British politics. Advocacy groups, including nearly all of the organisations whose work we explore in this report, acknowledge severe problems. Patronage politics, such as the mobilization of *biraderi* networks (see below), is fiercely criticized by Muslim political activists who seek to overcome what they perceive to be its disempowering effects. The concept of ‘misrecognition’ does not mean to deny such problems.

In thus appropriating misrecognition as a concept to explore participation and representation of Muslims in British electoral politics, this report identifies a number of tropes which misrecognise political claims towards equitable participation and representation. This occurs, and so is not immune from, a wider landscape in which questions of minority political representation are unsettled. These are summarized *firstly*. After considering methodological issues, *secondly*, the report offers a discussion of political agency and identity politics more generally. It considers the concept of misrecognition, *thirdly*, and outlines five modalities of the misrecognition of political agency, *fourthly*. *Fifthly*, the report explores aspects of the debate about Muslim representation, and, *sixthly*, investigates conceptions of the Muslim Vote and, *seventhly*, the limits of neutrality in politically partisan elections. By empirically working through these features of the debate about the political agency of British Muslims, we are able to illustrate some of the ways in which it can be misrecognised and how organisations respond to different types of misrecognition.

### ***Ethnic minority participation in British politics***

In focusing on Muslim political agency, the report seeks to illuminate how it is part of a wider socio-political context of ethnic minority participation in British political life. This includes a number of significant advances in recent years. In 2010 ethnic minority Britons even surpassed the white average in their electoral turnout (Sobolewska et al. 2011), and in recent years, moreover, there have been advances in the number of non-white members of the Westminster Parliament (now including 28 ethnic minority MPs), the House of Lords (48 Peers), Scottish Parliament (2 MSPs) and Welsh Assembly (2 AMs). Minority representation in local government has remained relatively stable and has varied over the last decade between 3% and 4% (Parsons 2009, 7; Cracknell 2012).

Full political rights in Britain are secured by obtaining UK citizenship. This currently requires a minimum of five years legal residence in the UK, of which at least one year must be classed as ‘indefinite leave to remain’. By international comparison these formal requirements are seen to be fairly liberal, and the comparative easiness of access to British citizenship has increasingly been regarded to be a problem. Recent governments, including the present coalition between Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, have introduced measures to make naturalisation conditional upon, for example, the command of the English (or Welsh or Scot’s Gaelic) language, knowledge of British history and culture and participation in civil society (the latter suggestion by the former Labour government to make naturalisation conditional upon ‘active citizenship’ was later withdrawn). Gordon Brown (2007) spoke of the need to reconsider citizenship as a “contract between the citizen and the country, involving rights and responsibilities.” David Cameron (2011) promised to revise the British Citizenship test and “to put British history and culture at the heart of it”. While the scope of the citizenship reform policies that the current government may adopt is unclear at the current moment, there appears to be a trend towards more restrictive formal requirements for the acquisition of British citizenship, and certainly a desire for more civic investment on the part of a

prospective applicant.

The backdrop for such revisions is the comparatively inclusive nature of citizenship. An anomaly in the United Kingdom are political rights that were historically connected to ‘Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies’ (CUKC) – a category that included nearly 2 billion individuals across the Empire. Although from the 1950s the right of these citizens, such as from India and Pakistan or the Caribbean, to *access* mainland Britain were increasingly restricted, immigrants from these countries were *eligible to vote* in national parliamentary elections upon their arrival. British ethnic minority populations have thus largely enjoyed full civic rights from the moment of their arrival (Hansen 2000, 3).

As was to be expected in the immediate aftermath of immigration, however, political participation was generally not among the highest priorities for newcomers. Institutional obstacles and wide-spread racism further meant that official channels for political participation were largely barred and that civic rights remained more formal than they were realized. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the first political mobilizations on an ethnic minority-basis were predominantly in response to local experiences of racial discrimination. In 1963, the ‘colour bar’ in place at the Bristol Omnibus Company was effectively challenged in a campaign that was led by Paul Stephenson (Hiro 1992, 43). This campaign was inspired by civil rights campaigns in the United States and included a bus boycott.

Within the formal political process, throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s the Labour Party was the predominant entry point for ethnic minority citizens into mainstream politics. The increasing number of non-white Britons in elected office is the result of how obstacles were removed and channels for participation gradually opened in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2011 28 non-white Members of Parliament (MPs) account for 4.3% of the total numbers in the House of Commons (650 MPs). A representation of ethnic minority population in proportion with their presence in British society, would mean 78 MPs (Cracknell 2012, 4). In comparative terms, Britain is significantly closer to a proportional representation of minority citizens in elected office than Germany or France are; it lags behind other places, such as the Netherlands (*ibid*, 6-7).<sup>35</sup> The non-white population of the United Kingdom amounts to 9.1% of about 59 million, roughly 5.4 million persons (according to the 2001 Census). In 1987 the first four non-white MPs in post-war Britain were elected to parliament. This number has recently increased, most significantly as a result of the 2010 general election.

*Table 1: Ethnic minority representation in the House of Commons*<sup>36</sup>

	1992	1997	2005	2010
Number of MPs	6	12	15	27

The general election 2010 saw 27 minority background MPs being elected, 15 for Labour, 11 Conservatives, and no Liberal Democrats.<sup>37</sup> While this represents a significant increase from roughly 2% to 4% among all MPs, the bulk of this increase is due to nine newly elected

<sup>35</sup> Unlike national assemblies in the Netherlands and Germany, the House of Commons does not have an electoral system of proportional representation but simply ‘first past the post’ in single-member constituencies (Lijphart 1999).

<sup>36</sup> The categorisation of these MPs according to ethnicity or religion is a sensitive issue since both of these categories are highly personal. We can assume that up to half of the current ethnic minority MPs have some Muslim family background.

<sup>37</sup> With Seema Malhotra a 28th ethnic minority MP was elected for Labour in late 2011 in Feltham and Heston. With the resignation of Marsha Singh and the election of George Galloway in Bradford West (see below) this number is 27 again.

Conservative MPs. It is thus a result of David Cameron's commitment to increase the number of minority candidates in winnable seats (through the so-called 'A-list' of candidates): not because of "crude political calculation, or crazed political correctness", but in order to improve the "political effectiveness" of his party (Cameron 2005; see also Green 2010; Walters 2010); it is consonant with a recent statement by the chairwoman of the Conservative Party, Sayeeda Warsi, that "unless and until campaigning with BME [black and minority-ethnic] communities is institutionalised and embedded in every aspect of what we do as a political party, we cannot win an overall majority in 2015" (Warsi cited in Mason 2012).

Regardless of such commitments, the Conservative party still lags behind Labour and there is limited evidence of increasing variation among some ethnic minority constituencies (Heath et al. 2011 and Table 4, Appendix). The issue of Conservative support highlight some discontinuities among ethnic minorities in British politics. While support for Labour is overwhelming among all groups, Black Caribbean Conservatives are statistically non-existent. Among South Asian immigrants, the picture is more varied, and Conservative voters are significantly more numerous among Indians (24%) than among Bangladeshis (16%), Pakistanis (12%), Black Caribbeans (9%) and Black African (6%) groups. While Black Britons are the ethnic group that is most hostile to the Conservative Party, British Muslims are the religious group that is least likely to vote Conservative (4% and 5%, respectively, indicating that they feel represented by the Tories and, conversely, 45% and 35% indicating that they would *never* vote Conservative). Conversely, support for Labour is highest among these two categories (55% and 47%) (Ashcroft 2012, 44-5).

While a significant number of British Muslims view the Conservative Party in a negative light, this does not mean that support for Labour is as secure as it used to be in the past. The decision of the Labour government, lead by Tony Blair, to invade Afghanistan and Iraq has caused considerable alienation between Labour and its Muslim constituencies. The Respect party, formed by the break-away Labour MP George Galloway, successfully challenged the Labour incumbent in Bethnal Green and Bow in the General election of 2005 (Peace 2012). Salma Yaqoob came close to replacing Roger Godsiff in Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath. Although Yaqoob continued to perform well in 2010, Respect fared badly at this election. Talk of Muslim electoral politics beyond Labour seems premature and in their 2010 EMBES study, Anthony Heath *et al.* (2011, 265) found "no evidence [...] of any realignment of minorities in general away from Labour to other parties". The recent byelection in Bradford West, resulting in the sepectatular victory of the Respect candidate George Galloway, however pointed to an apparent dissatisfaction with Labour in constituencies with significant numbers of Muslim voters. While we do not claim that the Muslim vote is the only significant political phenomenon among British ethnic minority voters, we suggest that some of the most interesting and challenging aspects of the political accommodation of minority claims and identities can be illustrated with reference to the place of Muslims in British electoral politics.

### ***Research interests and methodology***

Our concern with this report is to explore how different mobilizations that specifically spoke to Muslim voters conceived of a number of salient issues, including the act of political representation, the 'Muslim Vote', and significant concerns to do with political neutrality and partisanship. All of these issues are difficult and contested; they are presented here in order to highlight aspects of the experience of misrecognition. This includes definitions of the concept of the 'Muslim Vote', which, as we use it in this report but also as it is being employed by the majority of our respondents, is not a statistical figure but a discursive construct that is given

different types of meaning, or even sometimes rejected as useless or meaningless.

The report draws on eight in-depth interviews with significant actors of the mobilization of Muslim voters in 2010. We have selected the most visible organisations that were operating at a national level. This means that we are not able to explore local particularities and grassroots experiences in detail; rather, our focus is on the construction of political messages, top-level discussions and strategic considerations. Interviews took place at locations in London, Leicester and York, predominantly in office buildings and professional environments. The length of interviews varied between 30 minutes and 2 hours.

*Table 2: Respondents*

Operation Black Vote	2 February 2012
MCB	12 January 2012
Youelect	25 January 2012
Finsbury Park Mosque	11 January 2012
House of Lords (Member)	23 January 2012
Cordoba Initiative	9 January 2012
ENGAGE	3 February 2012
MPACUK	28 January 2012

Although our interview sample is relatively small, it covers all of the significant national-level organisations that were specifically speaking to Muslim voters in 2010. We have been concerned to faithfully report positions and to point to interesting or exemplary strategies of argumentation. Where appropriate we are also examining the rhetoric and the discursive *topoi* that are discernible. We contextualize data from the interviews with campaign material, websites and brochures that the relevant organisations have issued (e.g. MCB 2010; MPAC 2010; Youelect 2010; ENGAGE 2011; OBV n.d.). These are referenced throughout the text and listed in the bibliography.

## **2. The Concept of Misrecognition**

This report examines advocacy groups that attempted to mobilize Muslim citizens by appealing, in one way or another, to collective concerns, interests and identities. It explores efforts to channel Muslim political identities to address perceived challenges in the advocacy and grassroots work of a number of organisations that targeted Muslim voters in the run-up to the 2010 election. In so doing we are less concerned with the statistical significance impact of Muslim voting patterns in British electoral politics. Rather, we focus on the subjective dimensions to explore conceptions of and motivations behind the Muslim vote – the attempt to define a role for Muslims in British electoral politics – and how such conceptions are contested. This is important because the way in which the Muslim vote was conceived in 2010 illustrates a remarkable level of uncertainty and hesitancy.

None of the major political advocacy organisations that targeted Muslim constituents in the election referred to the Muslim vote in an unproblematic manner. Organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), ENGAGE, the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC) or the Youelect initiative, as well as non-Muslim organisations such as Operation Black Vote (OBV), show a considerable degree of reflexivity about the environment in which they operate. We suggest that their concern to construct political messages and convey civic identities responds to this environment and can be understood as the request for a type of socio-political recognition that is evidently incomplete and fragile. Yet the tendency outwith

these groups is to ignore the dynamic features of such positionings and strategies, to deny actors an identity position from which they could reconcile a religious identity with full democratic membership, or to dismiss Muslim political mobilizations as inherently 'sectarian'. In short there are a number of ways in which Muslim political actors see themselves misrecognized, and we argue that the concept of 'misrecognition' is helpful in understanding the environment in which Muslim political actors operate and in explaining some of the evident dissonances that are reflected in their advocacy work and political positioning. At this stage we will, firstly, delineate the concept of 'misrecognition' and, secondly, locate it within the ACCEPT Pluralism framework.

Misrecognition is obviously a term relational to recognition, and the two most best known proponents of this concept began their dialogues with the same source (Toppinen 2005). Charles Taylor's essay on 'The Politics of Recognition' (1994) and Axel Honneth's book *Kampf um Anerkennung* (1994), both widely regarded as landmark texts on the topic, spend some time engaging with—both appropriating and departing from—Hegel's philosophical system. For example, shadowing Hegel's account of the three *arenas* of recognition (family, civil society and the state), Honneth argues that there are three *modes* of recognition, which he refers to as love, respect and esteem. Love is the mode of recognition which, all being well, we receive from our small circle of significant others. Respect is that mode which we experience when our fellow citizens regard us as rights-bearing individuals. Esteem is the sort of recognition we enjoy when we are valued for our distinct contributions to society's collective goals. Taylor, meanwhile, offers a philosophical and historical account of how the concept of recognition has come to reflect 'a vital human need' (1994, 26), one crucial to our ability to become full human agents. This claim stems from the Hegelian premise of the fundamentally dialogical character of human identity which Taylor elaborated on in *Sources of the Self* (1989). That is, one can become a self, capable of self-understanding and achieving 'self-definition', only in relation to other conversation partners, within 'webs of interlocution' (1989, 32, 36).

What is striking about these two leading authors is how little time they spend discussing misrecognition (cf. Martineau, Meer and Thompson 2012; Meer, Martineau and Thompson 2012). For Taylor, the concept of misrecognition is a relatively taken-for-granted inversion of recognition. Thus, he argues, "our identity is partly shaped by the recognition or absence, often by the misrecognition of others" (Taylor 1994, 25). Honneth offers a marginally more sustained elaboration of misrecognition, regarding it as "the withdrawal of social recognition, in the phenomena of humiliation and disrespect" (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 134). Despite this, misrecognition is emerging as concept in its own right (Thompson and Yar 2011), and especially as a means to understand minority political mobilizations that span different categories of political recognition: from seeking statehood (Seymour 2012; Staples 2012) to pursuing participation in the public sphere as co-citizens (Lægaard 2012; Martineau 2012; Meer 2012).

We argue that the concept of misrecognition is especially helpful to our discussion in two respects. Firstly, misrecognition is not a 'master concept', but an empirically sensitive instrument to register the struggle over minority claims. With this contextually sensitive approach we are able to focus squarely on the specific strands and processes that make up Muslim political mobilizations in our cases. Secondly, misrecognition allows us to register how minority religions provide categories of identity-related claims-making. Such claims are in most cases for inclusion and full civic membership irrespective of the particularity of one's ethnic or religious background; where, appropriating an idea by Jürgen Habermas (2005), the burden of 'translating' religious reasons into common language is not placed on the shoulders

of religious citizens alone and is not used to disqualify their contributions to public discourse. In the following discussion, we thus identify five different, though related, strands of how Muslim political actors see their political agency misrecognized and how they seek to address and remedy this experience.<sup>38</sup>

Just as toleration is never pure and always includes the “ineliminable reference to the less than ideal” (Horton 1992, 65), so recognition is an aspiration that will rarely, if ever, be fully achieved. In both cases the counterparts of such positive conditions require our attention if only to obtain a more complete picture of what motivates social struggles. These are as much *for* tolerance and recognition as they are *against* intolerance and misrecognition. Non-acceptance and intolerance have to be of interest not merely as absences but as positions in their own right and with their own specificity, such as how permutations of liberal argumentation underpin new practices of intolerance across European states (Mouritsen and Olsen Forthcoming 2013). More demanding positions in the ‘third class’ of acceptance, such as recognition or respect, equally correspond to specific social situations where they are not just missing or unrealized, but where the specific conditions of their absence need to be studied. Such absences and the ensuing struggles over misrecognition provide, as Honneth (1994, 274) suggests, a “critical, interpretive framework”. Similar to the arguments and anxieties that motivate intolerance, analysts of misrecognition have to identify social conditions, interpretive frameworks and discursive themes employed by actors that are engaged in such struggles.

What actors, or groups of actors, do in response to the experience of misrecognition will depend on the type of misrecognition, the group in question and the opportunities that are available. Misrecognized actors will take advantage of such opportunities to seek redress and to propose alternative truths about themselves that they wish to see recognized, although there may equally be situations of acquiescence and resignation. Offering a perspective that is especially helpful with regard to an environment with special ‘rules’, such as the political system, James Tully (2000, 479) suggest that

[w]hen a group puts forward a demand for recognition they seek to disclose the misrecognition or non-recognition in the existing rule of mutual recognition of themselves and others, to persuade others it is unjust and intolerable, and to display a preferred alternative.

He points to practices of disclosure, where actors seek to counter the experience of misrecognition through the projection and embodiment of alternative identities. These may then be registered (or not) by majority actors who might revise their conceptions of the minority in question. Yet even when the desired form of recognition isn’t forthcoming, the proposition of alternatives might in itself be empowering: there are many examples of how oppositional identities that are asserted against the social mainstream may be experienced as profoundly empowering by the minority group in question.

Drawing on Tully’s suggestions about reciprocal relationships in the struggle for recognition,

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38 We are not seeking to reconcile misrecognition across psychological-political phenomena, but are instead using it as a civic-political concept in debates about formal participation and representation. This corresponds to the idea of multicultural equality and its account of the harm of ‘negative difference’ experienced by people so negativised (Modood 2007, 37). The concept of ‘misrecognition’, stripped of its psychological and culturalist-evaluatory connotations, can play a central role in a politics of multicultural equality and equal respect. While this includes the issue of subjectivities, we are interested in their articulations as political relationships and not matters of individual esteem or psychology such as in the ‘intersubjective conditions’ of identity-formation that Honneth addresses (eg., 1994, 280).



there are three moments that we wish to highlight: (1) initial experiences of misrecognition motivate (2) claims for or the embodiment of desired identities that are then (3) socially acknowledged (or not) in a way that satisfies the desire to defeat misrecognition and achieve recognition. In the present report, we focus in particular on the first two moments of this relationship and only conclude with some limited predictions about the effects of Muslim efforts to project alternative civic identities in the course of the General Election 2010.

In conclusion, we suggest that the concept ‘misrecognition’ has analytical as well as normative purchase. Analytically it points to a significant dissonance between how an individual or collective identity is experienced and how it is socially understood and acted upon. When it systematically shapes the experience of particular social groups with shared ‘interpretive frames’ and shared claims for (a particular type of) recognition, misrecognition may motivate collective action. Although negative connotations of the concept are evident, we must not assume that it refers to the worst conceivable scenario of social marginalisation: voicelessness would obviously be a worse condition for minority groups. The conditions under which such groups are able to engage in the processes of interaction and disclosure that a struggle for recognition requires are *not minimal* but may be quite demanding and require that some type of civic inclusion has already been obtained. In this sense, this report investigates the flipside of types of acceptance that the ACCEPT Pluralism project clusters in its ‘third class’ of demanding forms minority accommodation (Dobbernack and Modood 2011, 32).

### ***Misrecognising Political Agency***

In this section we introduce five forms of misrecognition of British Muslim political agency. These forms are derived from an analysis of speech-acts and arguments in our fieldwork, yet they correspond to objections that have been made against ethnic minority participation and representation more generally, not just vis-à-vis Muslim political agency. We acknowledge that these types – listed in Table 3 below – are not entirely self-contained. Although they overlap, they account for distinct experiences of misrecognition that should be analytically distinguished for how they invite different activities of ‘disclosure’ in response. As we have suggested above, this report pays close attention to two features of the struggle for recognition: (1) the experience of misrecognition and (2) the proposition of alternatives in response to this experience. At this point, we exemplarily illustrate types of misrecognition that ethnic minority Britons have faced in their political agency.

As a general proposition among mainstream actors in British politics, equitable political representation of ethnic minority populations is relatively undisputed. Yet progressives as well as conservatives frequently disavow political campaigns that emphasise specific identity markers or that prioritize minority issues. One of the more memorable instances of such disavowals was the well-known Conservative advert that, depicting a black man in a suit, stated: “Labour says he’s Black. Tories say he’s British”.<sup>39</sup>

It is in particular the critique of ‘identity politics’ around which both left- and right-wing commentators continue to coalesce. For example, Douglas Murray (2010), the former director of the neo-conservative Centre for Social Cohesion (now associate director of the Henry

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<sup>39</sup> The advert suggested that “the Labour Party aim to treat you as a ‘special case’, as a group all on your own. [...] To the Labour Party, you’re a black person. To the Conservatives, you’re a British citizen.” The silence of the well-dressed man in the advert is telling: he is portrayed as a non-actor who will acquiesce to whatever type of identity category political parties devise for him.

Jackson Society), chastised the Conservatives for appealing to Muslim voters and remarked that all

three of the major parties continue to think that the identity-group era of politics is still alive and well; that as part of the multiculti mindset it is inevitable that you say different things to different “communities”; and that therefore you can say anything at all to get the alleged “Muslim community” to vote for you.

On the Left, critics of ‘identity politics’ point to the disempowering effects of the appeal to ethnically or religiously demarcated communities, how this reinforces hierarchies and conservative forces in the respective communities (eg, Hundal 2006).<sup>40</sup> In a manifesto that drew attention to such pathologies, the New Generation Network (2006) made the case that in

a throwback to the colonial era, our politicians have chosen to appoint and work with a select band of representatives and by doing so treat minority groups as monolithic blocks, only interested in race or faith based issues rather than issues that concern us all, such as housing, transport, foreign policy and crime. [...] We need to foster a climate in which people can have private differences which include religion, language and culture, but also have a public space where such differences are bridged.

This critique appears to be particularly directed at a type of politics that mobilizes kinship ties, *biraderi* in the case of Pakistani communities (see Werbner 1990; Anwar 1995; Purdam 2001 and forthcoming work by Parveen Akhtar), and that has recently been identified as one reason for wide-spread disenchantment leading to George Galloway’s victory in Bradford West (Akhtar 2012).<sup>41</sup>

Beyond the specific rejection of a type of politics that exploits communal hierarchies, it is often difficult to estimate the full extent of the critique of identity politics, such as of race- or faith-based mobilizations that happen to be bottom-up, do not perpetuate communal hierarchies and aren’t manipulated by vested interests. In a democracy, while it is important that some sense of commonality is fostered, it is neither possible nor necessarily desirable for politicians to not appeal to groups in the population (eg., the working and middle class, women, young people). It is important that identity politics is not identified with ‘monolithic’ groups and its dismissal not selectively used to marginalise and disable some groups, especially new entrants. In fact, a type of misrecognition (**M1**, see table 3 below) that we identify in the following is distinguished by its rejection, often selectively, of group- or identity-based mobilizations in the case of Muslim political actors.

While some commentators berate those concerned with ethnic minority representation for

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<sup>40</sup> While one can hardly expect this level of conceptual sophistication in policy discourse, Iris Young’s distinction between ‘identity politics’ and the ‘politics of difference’ can be usefully applied here: the former is a type “solidarity-producing cultural politics” (2000, 103) that tends to be present among disadvantaged groups; the latter are political articulations of claims for “fairness, opportunity, and political inclusion” (107) that relate but are not reducible to the request for the recognition of ‘identity’. Young’s intervention is directed at a wider debate about the extent to which political claims for the recognition of minority identities need to be accompanied by an immediate concern with socio-structural conditions of mis- or non-recognized minorities, or not; these debates do not concern us here.

<sup>41</sup> However the by-election also illustrates some fissures that are only beginning to be registered: Respect was widely accused of promoting sectarianism and exploiting Muslim discontent over the last decade of British foreign policy. Yet patronage politics were seen to be particularly reflected in Labour, not Respect, and its electoral complacency about ethnic minority votes. What this shows is that patronage politics and identity politics are not as congruous as mainstream observers seem to think.

their alleged divergence from consensual understandings of the nature of representative relationships, such relationships can indeed be understood in a number of different ways (see Pitkin 1967; Phillips 1995; Young 2000). As Hannah Pitkin (1967, 210) suggested, the act of representation can be conceived in an abstract and disconnected way, akin to “representation of unattached interests” as conceived by Edmund Burke, or as particular and intimate connection where close ties between representatives and represented are necessary because “interest, wants, and the like [are] definable only by the person who feels or has them”. In British parliamentary democracy it is not usually the case that the role of elected representatives is clearly conceived according to either the former or latter model; different expectations exist and claims can be modelled in line with divergent understandings of what representatives are for and what representation is about.

The conditions for the civic self-constitution of post-immigration groups are usually fragile and the request that they, sometimes even above all others, approximate idealized understandings of citizenship and democratic agency can be, and historically has been (see Casanova 1994), an exclusionary device. British Muslims are clearly some way beyond exclusion and in the aftermath of the Rushdie affair distinct patterns of their political agency became more widely acknowledged (Modood 1990). It has been suggested that the experience of stigmatization has led to a type of ‘pariah politics’ (Saggar 2009), which is reactive and primarily articulates grievances. Undoubtedly, British Muslim politics is characterized by considerable diversity and, although the concern to defeat stigmatization may be widely shared, strategies in pursuit of political objectives differ in line with religious, strategic and ideological commitments and follow distinct grammars of political agency (see O’Toole and Gale 2010). While ideological or religious commitments are clearly significant, they are not the only predictors of political activism among British Muslims. Some organisations, such as the MCB, have established networks, liaise with decision makers and lobby behind the scenes. Others seek to effect political change through public engagement and media work (e.g., ENGAGE). Others, again, operate and mobilize predominantly locally, on the ground and through social networking sites (MPAC). It would be a mistake to suggest that Muslim political agency can be reduced to or is determined by narrow or static conceptions of religious identities; the diversity of political mobilizations that exist and the different way in which religious identities are emphasized or merely play a background role reflects a considerable heterogeneity. Misrecognitions of this diversity and of the dynamism of political agency are another one of the tropes that we propose to investigate in the following (M2).

In a similar manner, the notion that Muslim political agency is purely reactive (‘Pariah politics’) risks conflating the proliferation of alternative sites of Muslim civil society (in terms of media production and consumption, community and religious activism, and arenas for Muslim dissent more broadly). It considers such processes as evidence of withdrawal rather than political pluralisation of the public sphere. Accounts that treat Muslim or minority political agency more broadly as purely reactive face a related objection. It is not the case that outside pressures always *determine* the political agency of marginalised groups; at least they usually do not give a good account of motivations and objectives that exist beyond the concern to overcome such pressures. ‘Excluded groups’, Modood (2005, 159, emphasis in original) suggests, “seek respect for themselves as they are or aspire to be, not simply a solidarity on the basis of a recognition of themselves as victims; they resist being defined by their *mode of oppression* and seek space and dignity for their *mode of being*.” As such we have to be sensitive to the advent of increasingly salient Muslim identities that are adopted and deployed in various permutations by many Muslims themselves. A key issue is how this ‘Muslim-consciousness’ connects to the sorts of ‘civic status’ that Muslims are seeking. The

types of civic status being referred to include those that have prevailed for other minorities under the terms of a peculiarly British multiculturalism, and which has sought to promote equality of access and opportunity, and has led to some significant recognition of particular minority 'differences'. In this domain and in arenas of political participation more generally, the concern to project political identities is as evident as the desire to overcome pressures. Its portrayal as driven by and reducible to grievances, purely reactive to outside pressures and devoid of positive political objectives, indicates a type of misrecognition that confronts British Muslim claims-making (M3).

There has been a tendency to reject mobilisations on the basis of minority identities and minority representation generally for its alleged incompatibility with a political orientation towards the 'common good' (M4). A historical expression of this position within the Labour Party can be found in research by Les Back and John Solomos. In Birmingham Small Heath, the contender for the 1992 Labour candidacy – the current incumbent Roger Godsiff – was challenged at selection meetings by minority candidates. Godsiff enjoyed support from trade unions and the national party; his eventual selection was marred by allegations of vote-rigging. Godsiff defended his position and suggested that the

trouble with people trying to become MPs now, they're trying to become MPs because they're members of an ethnic community, they're not trying to become MPs because they concern the whole of the community and they represent a philosophy. They don't understand that, they need to stop to think about it. I have to tell my councillors, some of whom aspire to become MPs, that their job is to represent all the constituents they've got, and often they're not very successful at it. And that's sad, so they still are not fully integrated into the Labour party, never mind the community. (Interview quoted in Back and Solomos 1992, 11)

The suggestion is that in order to *be representative* and to embody, for example, the 'Labour philosophy', minority concerns would need to be abandoned. It will generally be the responsibility of minority politicians to prove their ability to represent: a burden that does not apply to white politicians, not even in constituencies with significant post-immigrant populations such as Small Heath (43% in 1992). The suspicion is that their political agency reflects 'sectarian' interests which can only be appeased through continuous demonstrations of their commitment to the 'common good'.

A final obstacle, frequently encountered by Muslim actors, is the difficulty to forge alliances as a result of the perceived toxicity of Muslim concerns. It is clear that different organisations deal differently with such difficulties. The MCB, for example, has sought to establish collaborative relationships across the party-political spectrum and has stopped short of endorsing particular candidates or parties. MPAC, on the other hand, has chosen an approach that reflects its combative posture: while it endorses candidates, it tries to maintain some distance towards these, since the association could potentially be damaging to the candidates that MPAC endorses. It seems that in particular the concern to overcome the idea of 'bloc votes' has meant that organisations that were active in the political mobilization of 2010 were sometimes conflicted about whether to take sides in electoral contests. The inclination to endorse particular candidates may be strong, such as in the case of Ken Livingstone at the last mayoral elections in London (see below). However, the concern is, although to a different extent, that such associations could prove to be damaging to the candidates in question as well as to the objective of educating Muslim constituents, rather than funnelling Muslim votes towards preconceived destinations. Such considerations are widely evident and will be considered below; the concern with the due proximity or distance to political candidates

running for office points to a final experience of misrecognition that we investigate in the following (M5).

Table 3 (see below) provides a condensed version of these five experiences of misrecognition. As suggested above, we do not claim that these are discrete modalities. As is to be expected for categories that are derived from social experiences, they overlap and reinforce one another in how Muslim actors might experience a more general misrecognition of their political subjectivity. The following explores these modes through the rhetoric and argumentation of actors involved in the mobilization of Muslim constituents. This means that we are interested, firstly, in their accounts and interpretations of misrecognition and, secondly, in their suggestions about how this experience is to be overcome. We investigate these issues *in situ* – in relation to three noteworthy concerns and dilemmas that all of our respondents addressed. These are the questions of how best to represent Muslim concerns, how to conceive of the Muslim vote, and how to address a relationship between Muslim political agency and established political parties.

*Table 3: Five modes of misrecognition*

M1	Misrecognising Muslim identity politics as markedly different in kind to other identity politics
M2	Misrecognising the dynamic positioning and complexity of Muslim identities and concerns
M3	Misrecognising Muslim agency as purely reactive, grievance-based or ‘pariah politics’
M4	Misrecognising Muslim concerns as ‘sectarian’, not compatible with an orientation towards the common good
M5	Misrecognising Muslim political actors as ‘toxic’ and refusing political association

### 3. The politics of Muslim representation

It is worth registering that all of the activists that we interviewed, Muslim and non-Muslim, show a considerable degree of reflexivity about dilemmas of ethnic minority representation. One respondent pointed in fairly stark terms to problems with a mere focus on increased minority presence, which he labelled as representation “at the level of the individual”:

we have one or two Muslim MPs that are absolutely dreadful. They happen to be Muslims but actually, they’re dreadful, and most of their positions, you know, *vis-à-vis* the Muslim community, are totally negative. It doesn’t really matter that they’re Muslim. (Interview, 9 January 2012)

The ability to judge candidates on the basis of their policy record, the respondent suggested, proved that “the Muslim community is issue-based, and not religion-based” (Interview, 9 January 2012), thus seeking to refute a simplistic conception of Muslim political agency and countering accusations of sectarianism. There are indeed examples of Muslim-based mobilizations against Muslim candidates that were highlighted by a number of actors: MPAC, for example, lobbied against Khalid Mahmood’s re-election in the Birmingham Perry Bar constituency. Mahmood, it, was claimed, had “relied on the Muslim vote to keep him in power until now, however MPAC are asking what did he do to stop the illegal wars abroad

against Muslims and what did he do to stop the demonisation of Muslims in the UK” (MPAC 2010). A similar dynamic was evident in Bradford West where MPAC endorsed George Galloway and strongly argued against Labour’s Imran Hussein: “voters in the constituency a real chance to sweep aside the tired old pattern of voting in lack lustre candidates, just because they wear a red rosette” (MPAC 2012). In these cases, non-Muslims were favoured over Muslim candidates, and this was noticed, indeed highlighted, as an attack on a form of unthinking support for Labour and for co-religionists that was seen to have plagued a previous era of Muslim political participation.

Commenting on their strategic thinking in these and other cases, an MPAC representative suggested:

We’re not just asking for more Muslim MPs. We are underrepresented in the House of Commons. The latest intake has seen more Muslim faces but we’re not just saying: more Muslim MPs. What we’re saying is that non-Muslims MPs also need to address the concerns of their Muslim constituents, which we feel in a large extent are being ignored. But it’s not universal, there are very good MPs in the House of Commons, who are very sensitive to Muslim issues. But there are also many who aren’t. And what we’re trying to do is to get more participation, and we’re also encouraging Muslims not just to be consumers of politics but also be participants. (MPAC, Interview, 28 January 2012)

A respondent from the MCB agreed that particular types of community politics, which he labelled as the ‘politics of representation’, were detrimental to Muslim interests: “unity is dissipating where you have vested interests competing for that patronage for government access” and this “is damaging to the community itself and damaging especially to the younger people” (Interview, 12 January 2012). There is a concern, moreover, that the accentuation of diversity ‘at the individual level’ serves as a cover to conceal the lack of serious commitments to racial or religious equality. Commenting on the policy record of the current and the previous governments, one respondent suggested as much:

They’ve made this symbolic breakthrough of having a Westminster that’s never looked like it has and yet race equality, up until very recently, up until last summer, was off the agenda. How ironic is that? And the irony is that our success led people to believe that we’ve done this now, we’re in a different place. We’ve had two Muslims in the Cabinet. We have a party that’s beginning to look like the people it serves and yet five years prior to that, race equality was going further and further away. Multiculturalism was being trashed. (OBV, Interview, 2 February 2012)<sup>42</sup>

The suggestion is that the ‘politics of representation’ or of ‘presence’, as Anne Phillips (1995) puts it, amounts to little more than a fig leaf if it is not accompanied by a critical concern with policy-making *after* elections. While this representative of Operation Black Vote highlighted the value of an ethnic minority presence in parliament, it is striking that Muslim mobilizing organisations were widely concerned to distance themselves from a ‘politics of presence’ and to highlight the significance of issues or ideas. The risk of misrecognition that the concern with ‘presence’ invites, but also the concern to keep a safe distance to traditional ‘patronage’ politics, might be reasons for why the interest to increase the number of Muslim representatives was not usually an overarching concern.

A representative of Youelect highlighted a different type of problem with Muslim

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<sup>42</sup> The incident the respondent referred to were ‘riots’ in English cities in the summer of 2011.

representation. He pointed to the persistence of doubts about the Britishness of British Muslim, reflecting a situation where Muslim political agency is misrecognized as necessarily sectarian and incompatible with conceptions of the ‘common good’:

At the moment unfortunately any Muslim, either public figure or otherwise, is first a Muslim, then British and therefore his views are first pinned down to his Islamic identity rather than the British identity so I don’t think we’ve overcome that yet. [...] [I]n a way, there’s a dilemma that Muslims face. They consider this country as home yet they are asked to make choices that no other groups are asked to make choices, so their identity of being Muslim or British first, which is an absurdity. Why can’t you be British and a Muslim, as if the two are not compatible. (Interview, 25 January 2012)

A different respondent pointed to his own political activism, including a candidacy for the Respect party, as an example for a similar experience of misrecognition:.

One of the most common questions that came my way was, you know, ‘If you decided to do this, why don’t you go and establish a Muslim party?’ My response is that would be the worst thing, not only for the Muslim community but also for society because we don’t need a Muslim party, we’re calling for Muslims to be part of society, I don’t want them to stand on one side. You know, I don’t want them to stand out as Muslims, I want them to stand out as good citizens, but not specifically as Muslims. I have some very bad Muslims who, you know, go to prisons and you’ll see some Muslims who are drug dealers, who are in crime and the such, you know... it doesn’t matter that they’re Muslims. I have some wonderful politicians who aren’t Muslims, who are Jews, Christians, Atheists and the such, wonderful politicians. I have some very lousy politicians who happen to be Muslim. I understand that and this is what we’re pushing towards, this is what we’re fighting for, this is what we hope to achieve one day – a society where people stand out because of their level of performance, not on who they are, not on the colour of their skin or the language that their fathers’ speak or their religion or faith or such. (Interview, 9 January 2012)

Among the actors of the 2010 mobilization there was thus a measure of concern about dilemmas of representation. This concern was about the way Muslim political actors were forced to abjure their Muslimness in order to claim a more encompassing political identity. At the same time, the notion that increased representation would provide a remedy to inequality that could be achieved without a serious and issue-based commitments was widely denounced. How to balance the ‘politics of ideas’ with the ‘politics of presence’ was a live political issue for our respondents and reflects a strong concern to counter simplistic or particularist mis-representations of their political agency.

#### **4. Conceiving of the ‘Muslim vote’**

The notion of the ‘Muslim Vote’, and how actors of the mobilization consider or problematize its weight and coherence, points into a different direction for our concern with misrecognition and agency. As with political representation, there are ambiguities to consider that are, to some extent, the reflection of a difficult environment. The aspiration to ‘normalize’ the participation of British Muslims – to emphasize that a ‘bloc vote’ no longer exists or to argue that bloc-like voting instincts need to be overcome in favour of informed political decision-making – runs through the rhetoric of all of our respondents.

While highlighting the complexity of the concept of the ‘Muslim Vote’, organisations

involved in the mobilization are usually identifying concerns, including foreign policy issues, anti-terror legislation, and a generally negative climate of Islamophobic stigmatization, that they consider to be Muslim-specific. A MPAC respondent, for example, suggested that

there's a great deal of diversity amongst Muslim communities, always in the plural rather than singular ... but we do have common goals and issues that we all suffer [from], for example in domestic policies, we have, we can potentially be all victims of anti-terror legislation, stop and search, lengthy detention without charge, these sorts of cases affect us all. The issues such as education for our children, that concerns all communities, that sort of thing, job opportunities for Muslims, these sorts of things are universal, and then we can also talk about foreign policies. Now I'm not Palestinian but the issue of Palestine is extremely important to me and has been since I was a child. I'm not an Iraqi but the fact that my country who I believe does many good things in the world has in my opinion done something extremely bad, and something I'm very ashamed of, and that affects all Muslims. I would say the vast majority of Muslims would be extremely hostile to what was done in Iraq. So these issues do tie us together. (MPAC, Interview, 28 January 2012)

MPAC frames its activism with particular reference to the *ummah*, the global community of Muslims; its objective is the prevention of harm that Muslims experience internationally and domestically. While this does not necessarily mean a lack of concern for where oppression is experienced by non-Muslims, it is the case that other actors are keen to point towards a more encompassing concern with injustice: "Oppression, we don't accept it whether it is against Muslims or against any human being" (Finsbury Park Mosque, Interview, 11 January 2012.) To what extent the experience of oppression and injustice, or other issues that were seen to impact on British Muslims in a particular way, should be addressed as Muslim-specific, maybe even Muslim-exclusive, is thus somewhat contested. The reference to universal concerns, as with the MCB's public commitment to 'working towards the common good', thus contrasts with MPAC's (perhaps slightly less public) reference to the *ummah*.

Asked about the extent to which it was possible to speak of a 'Muslim vote', a representative for Youelect suggested that this was 'very difficult':

I've been thinking about this quite a lot since we had the election actually and whether the Muslim identity itself can determine which way they're going to vote or their personal factors, like any economic profession and country of origin. And I would say I don't think there's such a thing as a Muslim vote, it would be very difficult to pinpoint that. (Interview, 25 January 2012)

The MCB's mobilisation in 2010 and preceding elections corresponds with this account: in 2005, it was argued that "the needs and aspirations of Britain's Muslim community are no different from those of our fellow citizens – whatever their beliefs or backgrounds" (MCB 2005, 3). In 2010, the MCB suggested that "the Muslim voter, like any other Briton, may well make discerning choices of which their 'Muslim identity', if ever there was one, is only a part of a menu of considerations" (MCB 2010). Highlighting the issue of apathy among young voters, an MCB representative emphasized the importance of considering non-Muslim factors:

my hunch is the reasons people haven't been voting in high numbers if because of a sense of disillusionment rather than anything else [...] it's been: 'well why should I be voting, what difference would it make?' If you are voting on Muslim issues, then you feel no difference can be made, number one. Number two, it's in the context of



general youth apathy. Remember, in terms of election participation in this country, it's quite low anyway across the board. We cannot just use Muslim factors when asking ourselves why there are low numbers. (Interview, 12 January 2012)

In order to explain patterns of political behaviour amongst Muslim voters, the suggestion is that their religious identity would be just one aspect, and not necessarily the most important one, to consider. This clearly responds to a concern with being boxed-in and rejected as a result of simplistic conceptions of Muslim concerns.

Other activists of the mobilization in 2010 were carefully distinguishing between the problematic nature of the 'Muslim vote' and the legitimate concern to mobilize on the basis of Muslim concerns. A representative of ENGAGE, for example, suggested that

I don't like the term 'Muslim vote', because it kind of condenses and generalises and homogenises something that I think is a much more complex phenomenon. At the same time I'm resistant to efforts by political parties that like to articulate this idea that we want to engage with the Muslim as an individual, because I think within any democracy individuals exist *sui generis* ... but you have the freedom to associate, and by virtue of association you create organisations, and where organisations exist that lobby, I don't understand why this local party would say 'well you as a rugged individual I can deal with, but an organisation I won't'. (Interview, 3 February 2012)

Regardless of the empirical reality of a 'Muslim vote', the suggestion is that doubts about its coherence should not be used to discredit attempts to mobilize Muslim constituents. The dismissal of 'identity politics', in particular when it is selectively levelled at Muslim actors, but not at any other group that associates on the basis of a shared identity, corresponds to a type of misrecognition that we have identified previously. A different respondent argued along similar lines, that "I'm not someone who favours religious politics, but I believe that there is a call for religious politics at a time when a particular religion is being targeted" (Interview, 9 January 2012). In addition to such reactive justifications for mobilizing a 'Muslim Vote', which are reminiscent of debates about identity politics and 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1988), the same respondent suggested that religion should simply not be considered as singular case and as entirely distinct from other instances of interest- or group-based political activism.

If religion becomes a catalyst towards people taking part in a democratic process, I'm happy with that. If football becomes the catalyst for people to take part in something that is, you know, a democratic process, I'm happy for that. [...] We have, you know, communities or groups with interests, you know, whether based on ethnicity, race, religion, colour, creed, hobbies, leisure, entertainment, we have that. But we're talking about it as sort of an issue or a problem even simply because of the type, of the context, because we're operating within a context that is defined by 9/11, it's defined by 7/7, it's defined by terrorism, it's defined by extremism, it's defined by wars, it's defined by, you know, all these issues. (Interview, 9 January 2012)

The stigmatization of Muslims or of Muslim concerns in the public sphere, however, meant that some organisations were clearly more careful when considering how to frame their political activism. Youelect, for example, chose not to prominently highlight Muslim-specific concerns or even name its actual target group on its website. A result of experiences of misrecognition, the concern was that anything with "the pre-fix of Islam or Muslim has a negative connotation immediately and I think there's a counter productive element there" (Interview, 25 January 2012). In contrast to such concerns about the risk of being dismissed

or negatively perceived, other organisations appeared to see a certain strategic benefit in highlighting a Muslim agenda, an “acknowledgement that this is a constituency that they [politicians] cannot ignore” (Interview, 2 February 2012). The idea was that there is a certain strategic usefulness; despite difficulties in identifying a ‘Muslim Vote’, the appeal to this concept could help to increase the public visibility of important concerns and elicit some response from campaigning politicians.

This consideration, however, can be turned on its head, and with good reason. Even for merely strategic reasons, the emphasis of a ‘Muslim vote’ might encourage a type of intellectual laziness that some consider to be characteristic for how politicians had engaged ethnic minority groups in the past. By contrast highlighting the multiplicity of Muslim voices, as one of our respondents suggested, means that

you’re able to populate that space and give voice to all the different perspectives that exist in the Muslim community, and it to me can only be a very good thing. Because it means that when politicians are looking around for a Muslim voice, they’re all automatically confronted with Muslim voices, and they have to get over this idea that, you know, a Muslim voice will suffice, because they’re confronted with a cacophony of voices and you have to deal with that cacophony. And annoying as it is, you have to deal with it, because that’s the reality of the British Muslim community. (ENGAGE, Interview, 3 February 2012)

The suggestion is that the diverse engagement of a number of organisations, reflecting the complexity of British Muslim politics, would make it more difficult to mis-characterize their political agency.

## **5. Limits of neutrality and partisanship**

The 2008 election of the Mayor of London has been a particularly crucial case of contestation about how to speak to and mobilize Muslim voters. Widely considered sympathetic to Muslim concerns, the incumbent, Labour’s Ken Livingstone, benefited from the support of the Muslims4Ken initiative. Livingstone lost the election and there were some concerns that Boris Johnson, the Conservative contender and elected Mayor, had been portrayed in a way that would make it more difficult for Muslims to engage with him. During the campaign, MPAC had urged its supporters to “help save us from a Zionist Islamophobe becoming Mayor of London” (MPAC 2008). Responding to controversial statements by Boris Johnson, Muslims4Ken portrayed the Conservative candidate as an “Islamophobe who has insulted and condemned Islam and Muslims”.<sup>43</sup>

In the *Guardian*, Asim Siddiqui attributed Livingstone’s defeat to allegedly inept efforts by Muslim organisations in support of Ken and the backlash that these had triggered. Siddiqui pointed to “radioactive” effects and that “Muslim lobbyists can do little else but take note. If the very candidate you are endorsing is being damaged by your endorsement, then surely it’s time for a rethink” (Siddiqui 2008). Disputing this account, Challenging this account, Anas Altikriti took particular issue with the assumption that led Siddiqui to the conclusion that it was time to stop “to mobilize the ‘Muslim vote’” (Siddiqui 2008). Altikriti argued that “[t]o

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<sup>43</sup> This condemnation was later re-written in slightly less devastating terms: “Boris Johnson’s record doesn’t hold much hope for London. He has no experience of running a city, has vowed to scrap many progressive policies and has insulted women, blacks, Muslims and many other groups. Vote Ken on May 1st for a progressive, diverse, forward-looking London” (see <http://muslimsforken.blogspot.com/>).

suggest that while Muslims can come under collective attack, suspicion and scrutiny as a result of crimes committed by a few, but can only defend themselves and fight for their rights as individuals, is nothing short of absurd - discriminatory, even". Siddiqui's call for caution, Altikriti suggested, reflected the social stigmatization of British Muslims as a 'special case' and mainstream tendencies to individualize, misrecognize and discredit any collective articulation of Muslim political concerns.

Strategic considerations about how to mobilize voters in the run-up to the general election two years after Livingstone's defeat were clearly influenced by the experience of the mayoral campaign. The MCB, for example, which hadn't endorsed Livingstone despite clear preferences among its membership, felt encouraged in its position of neutrality. An MCB respondent pointed to the significance of the mayoral campaign when he argued that "it wasn't for MCB to endorse". The MCB would "do everything in terms of encouraging raising issues, but stop short of saying who to put in their ballot box. It's more of service facilitation. You make your own mind up" (Interview, 12 January 2012). The fact that a political campaign had used the notion of a 'Muslim Vote' in support of a specific candidate was registered as an anomaly, similar to Siddiqui (2008) who observed that there had been no "JewsforBoris" or, referring to the Lib Dem candidate, "GaysforBrian" campaigns: "You don't have a chief rabbi supporting a campaign for Boris" (MCB, Interview, 12 January 2012). This was not meant as a critique of mobilizations for Ken; the MCB, as a representative Muslim umbrella body, considered it necessary to maintain neutrality, despite clear affinities with Ken Livingstone and the Labour party, in order to be able to engage with elected representatives regardless of their party backgrounds.

In the mobilizations of 2010, similar differences of strategic positioning were evident. Youelect, for example, primarily intended to familiarize Muslim voters with policy issues and candidates' policy record. Just before the general election, however, it published links to two lists of recommended candidates (one by the British Muslim Initiative, closely connected to Youelect; the other by Salaam.co.uk). A respondent for Youelect introduced the rationale for this departure from a more neutral position as follows:

up until, I think it was the final week or the final two weeks, we didn't favour one over the other. We just said this is the information, these are the priorities, here's how it works, you go and decide, and you go and decide by meeting in your mosques and your community centres, in your homes, by talking, by discussing, by holding people accountable, asking them questions. [...] it was only towards, I think, the last week or 10 days of the elections that we started to come up with the idea of the lists, that, okay, fine, after all this and people, some of them have actually, you know, sent those by post. But we feel that now is the time when we should say well, listen, there are some really very bad candidates and regardless of where they stand on the playing fields, they are really, really bad candidates. (Interview, 9 January 2012)

A different respondent similarly suggested that "people appreciated the fact that we [Youelect] weren't spoon-feeding them or we're not dictating on what they should be doing, we were simply directing them" and that "people did feel empowered through Youelect but making sure we didn't encroach on their personal political space" (Interview, 25 January 2012). Accordingly, the reason why the organisations eventually offered concrete voting advice was "a lot of push coming from the community itself" (Interview, 25 January 2012).

By contrast, the position that ENGAGE adopted in line with its objectives was to provide background information without offering recommendations. It

would never advocate that you vote for this particular candidate, because it would be irresponsible to be fair, but also because it's the local communities that determine which candidates they want to elect. It's for... you know, you may necessarily agree that a Conservative candidate has more in common with you as a social conservative, but it may be that the local candidate is more appreciative, or more sympathetic, or more aware of your community's issues. So the decision you cast must be one based on the representation of your interests in parliament, and that's something we would never dictate (Interview, 3 February 2012)

MPAC was directly targeting candidates whose policy records it rejected. Without aiming for neutrality in its local interventions, it nonetheless did not endorse a specific party and displayed some awareness of dilemmas with its local activism. It was suggested for MPAC that

we have to be careful about how we position ourselves. So when we campaign, we campaign as an independent group, we are not in the pockets of anyone that we are trying to promote because what happens is, that can be used against them. So we're backing a candidate, for example from a party, his opposition will simply try to portray us as extremists and that this candidate is in the pocket of that group. So deliberately what we do is we keep distance from any candidate that we endorse. We're not asking for *their* endorsement. We're endorsing *them*. (Interview, 28 January 2012)

The portrayal as 'extremist' was understood as a malign, but to some extent unavoidable, accusation in the present climate: "accusing people who are pro-democracy of having some kind of violent, extremist agenda. It's nonsense" (MPAC, Interview, 28 January 2012). Accordingly, while articulating sharp and opinionated positions in the course of electoral campaigns, MPAC sought to tread carefully in its relationship with politicians that it endorsed.

A different issue regarding the party-political preferences that were either present or absent in the mobilization pertains to the choice of 'mainstream' over 'fringe' parties. For Youelect, for example, it was suggested that the 'Muslim community'

in a cultural sense it has adopted a certain British cultural concept of trying to put your vote with mainstream parties. They understand that to be influential, you'd have to be with mainstream and in Britain, there's two parties. In a way, if you think about it, the Lib Dems should have been the more natural selection and in fact all polls initially indicated prior to 2010 election there'd be a massive swing towards the Lib Dem but it never materialised. That also shows that in a way, when push comes to shove, they will go with the mainstream cultural concept. So I think that was quite interesting, it's a very interesting evolution in the political thinking of Muslims. (Interview, 25 January 2012)

This position corresponds to considerations that an MPAC representative proposed: "left-wing, right-wing actually does not matter so much, what matters is political representation, to have a political voice, in both the left and the right" (Interview, 28 January 2012). It was his suggestion that Muslim voters had to be 'rational' decision-makers and that this would mean seeking access to mainstream political representation: "What we are saying is forget all the fringe parties, it's the three main parties" (Interview, 28 January 2012).

The emphasis on the maturity and sophistication of Muslim voters is perhaps the most widely shared point of reference in the rhetoric of the various initiatives that were mobilizing such

voters in 2010. While this emphasis offers a strong challenge to frequent misrepresentations of Muslim political agency, it contains some ambiguities. While the definition of the ‘Muslim vote’ as the sum of discerning, hard-nosed and ideas-based choices might hold some strategic benefits, it may also limit the room for political manoeuvre and cement a ‘special’ status for Muslim political agency. The focus on mature and sophisticated political subjects that is proposed might point to a way towards a normalization of the Muslim presence in British political life. However, maturity and sophistication, similar to the proof that minority politicians have to offer regarding their ability to be ‘representative’, might also constitute an additional burden for Muslim political agency.

## 6. Conclusion

While misrecognition has been our focus, we do not suggest that it provides a complete or determinative account of Muslim political agency. Indeed experiences of misrecognition are not understood particularly well if they are viewed as merely constraining opportunities for agency and inviting nothing but coping strategies and a posture of defensiveness. The political positioning that is evident among the organisations examined in this report shows that constraints are often creatively dealt with and that perceived pressures invite a significant degree of reflexivity and strategic awareness. Although the past decade has been a challenging time for confident expressions of Muslim identities in British politics, there are some indications that political actors succeed in projecting political subjectivities that are not simply determined by the experience of misrecognition. The diversity of attempts to delineate such identities, as is evident among the mobilizations examined in this report, might make it more difficult for Muslim political claims to be misrecognized. Moreover, the ‘disclosure’ of alternative truths about Muslim political agency, even where its particular claims fail to be registered or accepted, might in itself be a strong political signal. While British Muslim claims to be viewed as political agents of a particular kind may not (always) succeed, they may be viewed as political agents nonetheless and, as such, as legitimate interlocutors and fellow citizens.

In addition to defeating misrecognition, the wish for a certain civic normalization is widely evident, perhaps even more evident that the desire to propose oppositional identities against the social mainstream. This may be conceived as a desire for hyphenated British-Muslim identities to be recognized as ‘normal’ and thus for a situation where “difference does not make a difference” (Schiffauer forthcoming 2013). Alternatively, such aspirations may be seen to point to a type of ‘respect’ that results from the fact of common citizenship. In both cases, claims may be most appropriately conceived within a ‘third class of acceptance’, where “toleration is not enough and other normative concepts, namely those that focus on majority-minority relations and the reform of institutions and citizenship, are or should be more relevant” (Dobbernack and Modood 2011, 32). It would be widely acknowledged that such aspirations are currently not fully realized in British political life. As we have argued, the political agency of British Muslims is at least partially informed by pressures and obstacles that determine political standards of acceptability.

We have argued in this report that misrecognition does not mean ‘misperception’. The concern with counter-narratives or to brush aside problems and idealize the political agency of British Muslims may not be appropriate or helpful. Indeed, the focus on misrecognition helps explain aspects of agency but it does not lend itself for an estimation as to *how* British Muslims desire to be politically recognized. Political theorists have recently emphasized the role that democratic agency has to play in any determination of the *terms of recognition* (eg,

Tully 2004; Modood 2008, 49). Not just concerned to counter misperceptions, there is a wish to claim some ownership of the debate about the political presence of British Muslims. The initiatives that we have investigated in this report demonstrate this goal, which is not to project particular identities but to create a space where a number of civic identities can be projected.

## **V. Conclusion**

This report has focused on what we take to be the most significant cultural diversity challenges in Britain today. These challenges are related to the post-immigration settlement of persons, primarily from the British Empire/Commonwealth, who enjoyed free right of entry and residence in Britain till 1962. Despite this migration taking place primarily during 1950 – 1970, with significant family reunification going on until about the mid 1980s, these groups and their descendents are not unproblematically welcomed as co-nationals. Their acceptance in British society is still a live socio-political issue.

While their acceptance remains disputed, we have discussed such disputes in several case studies dealing with contested events and exploring discursive, political and practical perspectives on contestations. Claims for the accommodation of religious identities in the public sphere, such as in education and politics, are an issue in particular as far as concerns and requests by British Muslims are concerned. In addition to disputes about national-level politics and local practices of accommodation, there are important questions about how to symbolically acknowledge the presence of post-immigration groups. This includes the pluralisation of the British ‘national story’ (as envisaged by the Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, see CMEB 2000) or the kinds of ‘belonging’, national or otherwise, that are available to non-white Britons. In addition to disputes about material practices and policy choices, we have thus drawn attention to symbolic negotiations of identity and difference and to their relevance for whether Britain can claim to be hospitable to the post-immigration diversity that it empirically contains. Such issues are complicated, yet by all accounts also facilitated, by the nested identifications that exist alongside Britishness and by the potential for its hyphenation with other identity markers. The identity politics of ethnic minority groups, whose sense of British identity often seems to exceed that of the majority (e.g., Muir 2007, 11; Jolley and Katwala 2012, 11), occurs against the background of ongoing transformations of such conceptions for all groups in society.

In order to revisit the issues and debates that we have covered in this report, the conclusion first highlights selected findings from the case studies. Secondly, it considers various claims for acceptance that are empirically present and, conversely, the types of intolerance, misrecognition and disrespect that post-immigration groups experience in contemporary Britain. It thirdly considers the findings of the case studies with a view to the political theory of tolerance and recognition and with a particular interest in the challenge of ‘double accommodation’. The report concludes with a number of policy-recommendations in the areas of education and political representation.

### **1. Cultural diversity challenges in education and politics**

One of the key findings of our research is that claims for inclusion are complex and multi-dimensional, usually entailing requests for material and legal alterations to existing practices as well as claims for recognition and respect. Especially the debate about how to commemorate the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, examined in Part III of the report, illustrates close connections between material and symbolic claims for accommodation and inclusion. Regarding ‘Abolition 200’, the type of language that would be used to acknowledge historical injustices and define the place of this legacy among national narratives was disputed. In education, concerning curricular perspectives on these issues and regarding the teaching of Black History more generally, three issues emerged in the course of

such debates. There were, first, concerns about how the curricular reach of ‘minority histories’ could be expanded beyond African or African Caribbean communities – how Black History could become everybody’s history. Secondly, the focus on history and culture is disputed even among African Caribbean parents and educationalists for whether it meaningfully affects the educational attainment of minority groups. Others suggest that only this focus can provide the validation and self-confidence that is required for educational success of young people that are multiply marginalized. Finally, the readiness to revisit and pluralize the ‘national story’ coincides with indignation among disadvantaged majority groups that might see themselves dispossessed and find their sense of history to be under attack by minorities and liberal elites (Fenton and Mann 2011; Rutherford 2011). A phone-in poll by a Bristol radio station revealed a 90% majority against a civic apology for the city’s involvement in ‘the trade’ (Hill 2006). Evidently, this way of pluralising the national story is not universally welcomed.

Symbolic contestations of national identity and cultural pluralism have a particular salience in contemporary Britain and are relevant for our discussion of the scope of acceptance. Left-wing intellectuals and some within the Labour Party currently seek to revisit the relationship to ‘middle England’ and working class constituents – populations that are seen to feel more strongly about national identity matters. While a communitarian emphasis to balance against difference may seem appealing, the risk is that invocations of ‘THE community’, ‘the common good’, ‘the nation’, are often monistic in their orientation, and can easily lead to an intolerant nationalism or extreme right ‘integralism’, with its inevitable corollary of violations of minorities (Modood and Dobbernack, 2011). Recourse to such ideas also leads to a more global ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, as in the neo-conservative ‘clash of civilisations’ discourse. Although more populist sentiments are often generated or manipulated by the right-wing press, it seems undesirable and unpromising to think of the preference for cultural pluralism or cosmopolitan diversity as a frame of mind that has to be imposed. The recognition of post-immigration diversity in the British national story, as well as in conceptions of Welsh, Scottish and English identity, will need to be organically connected to the diversity and multiplicity that already exists in each of these accounts.

For more pluralistic understandings of these national stories to be accepted, the sources of the experience of dispossession amongst disadvantaged majority groups will need to be addressed. This experience consists as much of a sense of culture or identity loss as it reflects socio-economic decline. The re-imagining of the ‘national story’ is thus perhaps best conceived as a type of civic-democratic objective that will require the participation of ethnic minorities and majority populations that do not usually have a voice in the public sphere. Recent efforts to make the Labour Party pay new attention to the concerns and identities of working class constituents are thus to be welcomed (Cruddas and Rutherford 2010; Glasman 2011). Yet they will need to be accompanied and balanced by a concern for pluralism that preserves and extends the spaces of acceptance that have been achieved in past decades (see Modood and Dobbernack 2011). It is evident that education can play a role in this balancing act.

The second case that we have explored in Part III of the report has dealt with debates over the accommodation of Muslim pupils in state schools. The guidance notes that the Muslim Council of Britain issued in 2007 became a cause célèbre for protagonists with strong views on religion in the public sphere. The contestations over the guidance were fuelled by different evaluations of the educational needs of Muslim pupils; by divergences about the requirements of Muslim religious practice and the possibility for compromise in the face of such requirements; and by different conceptions of ‘culture’ and of the ‘groupness’ of British



Muslims. While these issues led to some principled disagreement and heated debates, our case study suggested that the impact of disagreement about principles on local forms of accommodation is not always very clear. Freedom of religious practice is enshrined in the structure of British education, with occasional restrictions justified on health and safety grounds or in order to preserve school harmony. Despite the evident backlash that the guidance triggered, it is unlikely that we will see a departure from the commitment to accommodate religious practices in education and more generally. In contrast to the case of 'Abolition 200', which underscores the significance of symbolic choices and social imaginaries, the case of the guidance notes highlights the importance of path-dependent practices and commitments that are relatively unaffected by public debates, such as by recent attacks on multiculturalism (e.g., Cameron 2011). Critics of the accommodation of religion generally fail to make viable suggestions that would involve a significant departure from the standards of accommodation that are reflected in institutional and legal practice and that underpin a variety of local forms of inclusion. The continuity or expansion of, rather than departure from, multicultural policy-making that Will Kymlicka (2012) and Tariq Modood (Modood 2012) observe is thus confirmed.

Part IV of the report considered claims for the civic recognition of religious claims and identities in British political life. It specifically focused on the notion of misrecognition – the dissonance between conceptions of one's identity and their social validation – and how this experience was dealt with by British campaigning groups that mobilized Muslim voters for the General Election 2010. Their campaigns took place against the background of a wider picture of British ethnic minority politics. Here, equitable representation of ethnic minority citizens, despite some progress in recent years, has not been fully achieved. Our case draws attention to some of the obstacles towards equitable participation and representation, such as burdens of justification and stigmata that disproportionately affect Muslim political agents as well as sensationalism in the media that makes their political agency seem problematic and dangerous.

In contrast to these narrow and simplistic views of Muslim identity politics, the study highlighted complex features of deliberation and political positioning, as well as significant differences among the various mobilizing organisations. This was evident, for example, in the reflection upon dilemmas of political representation among Muslim political actors. A central concern for many Muslim activists clearly is the sense that they see themselves forced to abjure their Muslimness in order to claim more encompassing political identities. While such pressures were highlighted and deplored, there was some concern that, conversely, the numerical representation of Muslim politicians and their visibility in politics would not automatically serve the interests of Muslim constituents. How to balance the politics of ideas, for example the commitment to equality and social justice, with the politics of ethnic minority presence, the commitment to numbers and visibility, was a live issue.

This reflexivity about identities extended to questions about what unites individual Muslim constituents. The notion of the 'Muslim Vote' was problematized regarding its weight and coherence. As with political representation, there are ambiguities in the position of Muslim actors that are the reflection of a difficult environment. The aspiration to normalize the participation of British Muslims is widely evident, such as in the insistence that a 'bloc vote' no longer exists or that bloc-like voting instincts need to be overcome in favour of informed political choices. At the same time, the considerable strategic usefulness of the appeal to shared concerns is acknowledged. The new interest among mainstream politicians for ethnic minority constituents, at least during the months preceding general elections, results from the insight that such populations, including Muslim voters, can play a significant role in marginal

constituencies. There is some contestation, in particular within the Conservative Party, as to how such insights about future majorities and coalitions are to be acted upon (Murray 2010; Ashcroft 2012; Mason 2012). The request to de-emphasize religious identities and to treat Muslim voters as individuals is thus associated not just with misrecognition but with disempowerment. It is worth repeating that the struggles over acceptance that we have explored with this case study and elsewhere in the report are not primarily about enfranchisement or individual rights; they are about the rights and the recognition that is due to identity groups.<sup>44</sup>

## **2. Tolerance/intolerance - recognition/misrecognition**

Toleration is usually seen to entail a tension between the two ‘components’ of objection and acceptance (King 1976, 44-54). These need to be balanced for acceptance to be sufficient for non-interference without invalidating reasons for objection. Toleration is never pure or complete: it includes the “ineliminable reference to the less than ideal” (Horton 1992, 65), and it “can never be a ‘complete’ form of the positive recognition of the other’s identity” (Forst 2007, 234). This is because the forbearance of the tolerator is motivated by reasons that override but that do not cancel out opposition: rejection, disapproval and dislike remain intact.

Yet the balancing of reasons might change over time both individually as well as regarding societal evaluations of ‘difference’. Objection can be revisited and as a result of increasing familiarity, social contact or normative learning may be superseded by indifference or endorsement. Alternatively, objected features may become invisible such as when they are normalized or become widespread to the extent that they no longer stand out. Especially everyday expressions of immigration-related diversity in Britain – as in street styles, fashion, music and food – illustrate movements in which features that had been considered intolerably alien were normalized, generalized and endorsed. Yet the normalization of difference in some domains of social life does not support more enthusiastic proclamations of the end of racism: differential outcomes in education, the labour market or policing persist and still need to be addressed. The British ‘multicultural drift’ in particular does not imply that the accommodation of post-immigration groups that make religious identity claims has ceased to be challenging. The following (section 3, below) explores issues that result from a peculiar discontinuity in the acceptance of difference: the enthusiastic endorsement of individualized, cosmopolitan (‘new’) difference provides grounds for new attacks upon group-based expression of ethno-religious (‘old’) difference.

The boundary separating toleration from less minimal and more demanding positions is not firmly drawn. Even within the concept of toleration itself, it is the recognition of the other’s individuality that provides reasons for acceptance: objected features are put into perspective by respect for the standing of the other. In normative political theory, some have thus attempted to revise toleration so that it can more aptly respond to claims for respectful treatment of in particular public identity claims. Toleration, Peter Jones (2006, 140) suggests, “fits uncomfortably into a world constructed in terms of identity and difference rather than belief and value”. Elisabetta Galeotti in particular has proposed an account of toleration as

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<sup>44</sup> The case brings to mind long-standing liberal uneasiness about the accommodation of culture and groups such as already expressed in the well-known French Enlightenment position towards Jewish emancipation: “[a]s a nation the Jews must be denied everything, as individuals they must be granted everything” (Count Stanislaw de Cermong-Tonnerre, 1789, cited in Brown 2006, 51)

recognition that intends to provide more satisfactory (and less minimalist) responses to public identity claims.

Among the cases explored in this report, for example regarding the pluralization of the history curriculum, we propose distinguishing between the moral minimalism of toleration and more demanding positions that are claimed such as when the content of the ‘national story’ is reconsidered. Claims for the revision or extension of the curriculum are made in order to increase the symbolic weight that is given to the presence of minority groups. Education is an important site for the negotiation of how conceptions of nationhood can acknowledge social pluralism. We have suggested that the way in which such narratives are conceived and presented in education is symbolically, politically and practically significant. The systematic refusal to acknowledge the presence and contribution of post-immigration groups will negatively impact on their sense of worth, particularly where young people are concerned. The purpose of history instruction is to provide an authoritative account of the past and to identify an acceptable mode of how young people should relate to this past. Institutionalized disregard for minority presence means, practically, that perceptions are barred, relationships discouraged and ignorance perpetuated. This refusal implies a degree of non-recognition and disrespect if what is at stake is the presence of minority groups. The pluralization of history and citizenship curricula, in turn, is a sign of recognition.

The presence of significant numbers of Muslim pupils in British schools brings into focus some disagreement over how religious identity claims are to be considered and religious needs are to be treated. There are different opinions for example on whether to conceive of British Muslims as a collective of sorts or as individual adherents of (variegated) religious practices; whether religious tenets and cultural codes are to be kept separate or are inseparable; and on the possibility of compromise where faith-based claims are concerned. We have argued that principled disagreement in these areas or about the scope of religious accommodation more generally does not seem to lead to radically different conceptions of the respect that is due to religious choices. British public education, as it has been historically and institutionally developed, is consonant with this idea of respect. This respect is not necessarily or exclusively afforded to religion as a social good, and acceptance of religiosity in British school life is also underpinned by liberal standards of freedom of choice. Yet respect for individual religious choices is undoubtedly strengthened by the role of faith as it is envisaged in Britain’s ‘moderate secularism’ with its notion that respect for religion is “compatible with and may be a requirement of a democratic political culture” (Modood 2010, 13).

Finally, let us consider the normative ‘classes’ of acceptance that the response to Muslim political mobilizations can be seen to entail. The report has investigated features of Muslim political agency by drawing on the concept of misrecognition. Misrecognition draws attention to dissonances between how an individual or collective identity is experienced by actors and how it is socially understood. The concept thus allows considering actors’ responses to perceived pressures and how they make claims and project identities in opposition to alleged misperceptions or the refusal to acknowledge desired self-descriptions. The actor-centric perspective that we have adopted is beneficial in that it allows us to highlight relational dimensions of acceptance. Yet there is a corollary risk in conceiving of identity claims through the eyes of those making such claims and thus in terms of a desire for perfect outcomes. The complete validation of public identities, for British Muslims or any other social group, may not be attainable and perhaps not even be desirable (see Bader Forthcoming 2013; Lægaard Forthcoming 2013). Yet our focus on misrecognition and agency is not subject to the criticism that the politics of recognition sometimes invites. While the state and its agencies have a role to play in addressing serious distortions and hate speech, their main

purpose is to safeguard the kind of civic/democratic framework that makes it possible for all kinds of groups (and individuals) to publicly assert identities and to address misrecognition. This framework envisages a contribution by minority groups to the negotiation of the social terms of recognition. It seems to us that it is the desire for this type of contribution that most aptly characterizes the claims that we have explored in this part of the report.

### **3. The challenge of ‘double accommodation’**

We have identified a further challenge that concerns conceptual understandings of minority difference. This is the challenge of ‘double accommodation’ (see Modood and Dobbernack Forthcoming) that arises as the result of the plurality of identities, concerns and political claims that exist among British ethnic minority groups. While this plurality defies simple categorizations, we have drawn particular attention to two ideal-typical modes of difference, respectively addressed by the perspectives of *multiculture* and *multiculturalism* (see Introduction; Modood and Dobbernack 2011). The former refers to claims for effortless mixing, to the hybridisation of identities and the re-making of the national story so that hyphenated belonging (eg., Black British, British Asian) becomes thinkable and unremarkable. Although multiculturalism is equally concerned with conceptions of citizenship and nationhood, it has an additional concern is with difference in the public sphere and with how religious identities can be respected and asserted without penalties and stigma.

Besides their (imperfect) match with empirical realities of post-immigration difference, the conceptual languages of multiculturalism and multiculture inform public debates, scholarly analyses and political frameworks of minority accommodation. Some of the most contentious episodes of recent decades have been aggravated by uncompromising attitudes between the two perspectives. The Rushdie Affair is a classic example of where labels of ‘cultural traitor’, ‘brown sahib’ and ‘coconut’ (Sardar and Wyn Davies 1990), on the one hand, and ‘fundamentalists’, ‘fanatics’ and ‘mad mullahs’ (cf. Hanif Kureshi, ‘My Son the Fanatic’ and ‘The Black Album’) on the other hand, were thrown at each other by co-ethnics and co-religionists as well as more widely. While this toxicity has somewhat abated, it still informs a type of binary thinking that pervades the public debate about post-immigration diversity in Britain.

The challenge we have addressed in this report in a number of ways is that each of the two experiences of difference corresponds to an ethics of living and to claims for facilitation, incorporation, some form of separateness, toleration and recognition. There is no single way in which post-immigration groups make such claims for acceptance, which are expressed, as well as perceived and politically acknowledged, in distinct categorical frameworks. The real challenge for ‘double accommodation’ is that this multiplicity is at risk of being ignored. Yet even where it is registered, it may be conceived of antagonistically or exploited as such. The current diminishing of spaces for tolerance that Mouritsen and Olsen (Forthcoming 2013) observe for Western Europe results at least partially from its political manipulations. Desirable types of cosmopolitan diversity are pitted against ethnic identities and religious practices that are unwanted. Safeguarding the legitimate rights of the one group is seen to require the subjugation of the other. Tolerance becomes a scarce commodity and its concession highly conditional upon increasingly narrow requirements.

### **4. Recommendations for policy-makers**

This antagonism has to be addressed with an extended imagination, some sociological

awareness and a disposition towards conversation and dialogue. The Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain (CMEB 2000) asserted that Britain was a ‘community of communities and individuals’. In line with this suggestion, it has to be acknowledged that there are multiple ways of being different – individually and collectively – that are all compatible with the idea of British pluralism. It is manifestly wrong to suggest that group-based expressions of cultural difference and assertions of public religiosity are out of line and thus intolerable within this framework. Practices-based religiosity is as much a part of it as the multicultural *mélange* of superdiverse, urban Britain.

Many of the challenges that have been explored in this report could thus be resolved through the political acknowledgment of this multiplicity. The idea that certain expressions of post-immigration diversity are intolerable by default should be abandoned. It would be replaced with case-by-case appreciations of values and principles that take notice of local needs, respect for difference, but also consider of individual harm and freedom of choice. This would not mean that conflicts are always resolved. It would entail a democratic framework for negotiations, rather than lines in the sand. The report has covered a number of contested issues in the areas of public education and political participation and in line with the spirit of ‘double accommodation’ it makes the following case-specific recommendations that public policy-makers should consider.

### ***Education***

- Despite some toxicity in the public discourse about Muslim claims, it is individual choices and institutional trajectories that account for outcomes, multiculturalist or otherwise. Schools that choose their pupils, like faith schools, are less ethnically mixed than where pupils are allocated places by local authorities. The expansion of faith schools and indeed the recently prominent Big Society concept in general in so far as it hands over resources and decision-making to neighbourhoods, communities, charities and organised religion has the potential for more, not less, accommodation for ethno-religious and community-based claims; as well as increasing various forms of segregation. In their concern with education (as well as in other policy fields), decision-makers would do well to consider the effects of political choices and institutional design on multicultural accommodation in Britain. The use of difference-blind or anti-multiculturalist rhetoric in these contexts obscures rather than illuminates social developments and political choices.
- The kinds of claims for accommodation, acceptance and respect that we have surveyed operate according to distinct understandings of what toleration, respect and acceptance require. There is not just one way of being ‘different’ in contemporary Britain. Policy makers are thus well-advised to take seriously what respective understandings of cultural ‘difference’ mean and not to impose notions that may not fit. The pluralisation of historical understandings as a matter of respect for the presence of post-immigration groups, or the respect for the practices and choices of religious pupils both refer to legitimate requests but should not be misunderstood as meaning the same.
- Both cases have in common that they have triggered an often-furious response from right-wing quarters, presuming to speak for the majority population and complaining about the special treatment for groups. These responses invoke an experience of dispossession and identity loss. How such sentiments are mobilized needs to be challenged, but it is important to point out that claims for multicultural accommodation do not contradict a concern for identity-related and material pressures

faced by working-class Britons or for deprivation when it occurs in white-majority neighbourhoods.

### ***Politics***

- Muslim identity politics should not be conceived and publicly presented as markedly different in kind to other identity politics or even interest groups more generally. National broadcasters and news agencies must show better awareness and training on the diversity of Muslim political opinion groupings, as well as convergences on core issues, affecting Muslim communities and motivating their political participation.
- There should be an increased recognition of the dynamic positioning and complexity of Muslim identities and concerns. This could be achieved through better points of contact in particular to channel Muslim youth and women's groups into the mainstream political arenas at local and national levels, and so to ensure that these voices are not ignored.
- The notion that the political agency of Muslims is purely reactive should be challenged. Muslim representatives are often only given public visibility when they express grievances. While the expression of grievances is a normal political act and should be reported as such, there should be more interest in the media and the political mainstream for the everyday work and the civil society-based contributions of Muslim social and political activists.
- The representation of Muslim political advocacy as 'sectarian' and incompatible with an orientation towards the common good needs to be questioned. In light of the Leveson Inquiry it is important that news agencies make better efforts to include Muslim voices and Muslim actors in their reportage, so as to encourage a more accurate portrayal of the dynamic features of Muslim participation in mainstream politics. This is especially necessary where controversial issues are being reported and where there is a tendency sometimes to stigmatize but more often to sensationalize facts about British Muslims.
- The popular perception of Muslim political actors as 'toxic' is a form of stigmatisation that would be unacceptable if applied to other minorities. For mainstream politicians to go with such characterisations is damaging to an inclusive politics. All political parties should develop better relationships with Muslim organizations, to reach out and encourage participation in a manner that would facilitate a conduit for the mainstream presence of Muslim actors.

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